University of Alberta

Radical Ambivalence:
Examining Poststructural Subjectivities

by

Brandy Michelle Wiebe

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty if Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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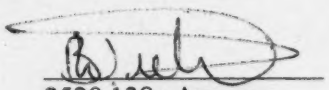

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Radical Ambivalence: Examining Poststructural Subjectivities submitted by Brandy Michelle Wiebe in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Douglas Aoki

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Abstract

This thesis, relying on Judith Butler's performative theory of gender, is a poststructural feminist analysis of Heather Robertson and Nikki Prime-French's performance art. It explores the radical aspects of Nikki and Heather's 'All You Can Eat' production and their appearances with the Canadian band Shocore, focusing specifically on how their art, by exposing the contingency of anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance, can be read as deconstructing hetero/homosexual and male/female binaries in a Butler-type feminist politics. In addition to this radical reading, just below its falsely coherent surface, there is also a more complex ambivalence central to their performances and intentions. This ambivalence is central to the various poststructural subjectivities examined in this thesis and has much import for future examinations of feminist political activism. Relying on a poststructural, post-humanist framework, allows for a more productive analysis of the contradictions and complexities inherent to performative subjectivities.

Acknowledgement

My sincerest thanks go out to both Nikki and Heather for agreeing to work on this project with me.

I would also like to thank my committee members Sharon Rosenberg and Lise Gotell and my supervisor Doug Aoki.

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Introductory Thoughts and Positioning

When I first considered using Butler's work as a platform for my Master's thesis I was both exhilarated and terrified. I was intimidated by the denseness of her work, but, like Susan Parsons, I also heard "in [Butler's] challenges to the description of the formation of the subject in modern Western thinking, a voice that [beckoned] me towards rearticulations of myself, of my being subject, and in these rearticulations to come into a new place of human being" (Parsons 2000, 91-91). I was drawn into Butler's work, despite myself. Just days after finally deciding to use Butler's work as a conceptual frame, I saw the performance of two women named Heather Robertson and Nikki Prime-French[1], in which I felt I saw some glimmer of a Butleresque politics. Before further articulating these performances and my theoretical treatment of them, which is the ultimate goal of this thesis, I would like to first provide a brief outline of Butler's performative theory of gender, as it provides a ground from which my subsequent work proceeds.

Butler stands out as a feminist theorist because of her critique of many current feminist approaches to the notion of gender and its attendant politics. She argues that the political desires of many strains of second wave feminism, given contemporary modernist constructions of rights and personhood, have forced the construction of a political category called 'women', whose members lay claim to rights and protections of citizenship that have traditionally been denied them. Certainly, feminism as a whole is not monolithic or coherent in its various political interventions but in many mainstream feminist approaches, particularly in liberal feminism, there is a fundamental reliance on the modernist constructions Butler seeks to dismantle. Presently, it is only within this humanist discourse of rights and citizenship can a subject be recognized: it is the criteria through which the subject is formed and acknowledged as such, and thus "the qualifications for being a subject must first be met before representations can be extended" (Butler 1999, 4). As Butler shows however, there are many problems surrounding the concept of the 'subject'. She points out, "there is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of 'the subject' as the ultimate candidate for representation...but (also) there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes...the category of women" (1999,4). Butler's thesis is that the limitations of contemporary feminist identity politics exist precisely "because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities" (Butler, 1999,6). For Butler, many feminist interventions have been weakened by their attempts to construct a coherent, universal patriarchal oppressor and a coherent, universal oppressed 'woman'. I thus concur with her critique, "the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from 'women' whom feminism claims to represent suggests the necessary limits of identity politics" (1999,7-8).

Acknowledging the concept of women as a failed construct suggests that it is better to understand how the concept came into being, rather than trying to elaborate a

[1] Here, I would like to mention that instead of the conventional use of pseudonyms for research participants Nikki and Heather's actual full names have been used throughout this thesis. I do this as an acknowledgement of both their active participation in this research, which was integral to my method, and their artistic creativity.

new and more inclusive category. Butler is not naïve, however, and she does acknowledge that presently "there is no position outside this field" of modernist identity politics – but there is still the chance to perform "a critical genealogy of its own legitimating practices" (1999,8). A decent into negative fatalism is not inevitable because there is still the possibility of strategically critiquing the very categories upon which we base our politics. For Butler, this strategy undermines the basic assumption that gender somehow mirrors or is restricted by sex. That assumption continues to underlie feminism and sociology's general acceptance of the binary gender system. But why is decentering and dislocating the subject necessary or useful? Here, Butler follows Foucault. If, as they both contend, "subjects are constituted by power, then to assume the existence of subjectivity and the possession of its capacities would be to obscure the need to interrogate the political construction of the subject" (Stern 2000, 113). This analytic failure closes off questions of how the very enabling of subjectivity and agency includes some people and excludes others by rendering them unable to speak with authority (Stern 2000, 113). In a different context, Butler comments, "the critique of the subject is not a negation or repudiation of the subject, but, rather, a way of interrogating its construction as a pregiven or foundationalist premise" (1992, 9). Thus, the subject, who remains at the heart of current politics, need not be completely rejected but must be held suspect.

Questioning the essential nature of gender identity, Butler asks, "If gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently, or does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism, foreclosing the possibility of agency and transformation?" (1999,11). By unpacking the very constructions that themselves constitute gender, Butler seeks to show that gender can be productively (re)configured and (re)described. This possibility is at the heart of Butler's gender theory. Her work is a fundamental shift because, rather than accepting gender as something that exists and exits as two distinct flavors, she examines the role of hegemonic cultural discourse in limiting our imaginings of gender. She shows us that there are ways of conceptualizing gender outside of the hierarchical, dualist, oppositional relationships of Cartesian philosophy.

Before moving onto the key aspects of Butler's theoretical perspective, I want to first discuss one of her most basic assumptions. Early in *Gender Trouble*, Butler asks, "If 'identity' is an effect of discursive practices, to what extent is gender identity, construed as a relationship between sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire, the effect of a regulatory practice that can be identified as compulsory heterosexuality?" (1999, 24). Butler answers her question by arguing that gender identity is the outcome of regulatory heterosexism. Our constructions of binary gender are only intelligible-that is, stable and coherent- within what Butler calls the 'heterosexual matrix'. This matrix is an over-arching discursive model of gender understanding, which assumes that in order for bodies to be intelligible they must purport a stable, coherent gender that expresses an underlying biological sex. Butler later acknowledges, "[the] heterosexual matrix became a kind of totalizing symbolic, and that's why I changed the term in *Bodies That Matter* to heterosexual hegemony. This opens the possibility that this is a matrix which is open to rearticulation, which has a kind of malleability" (Butler and Osbourne 1996, 119). Butler succinctly states:

> Gender can denote a *unity* of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender - where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation for the self - and desire – where desire is

> heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires. The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality. That institutional heterosexuality both requires and produces the univocity of each of the gendered terms that constitute the limit of gendered possibilities within an oppositional, binary gender system. (1999, 30).

Understandably, this is why Butler views gender norms as violent and coercive. This being said, what are affected are not only minority or negated sexualities and genders that do not embody ideal sex/gender/desire stability and coherence, but all of us, insofar as our gender imaginations have all been limited. "The binary regulations of sexuality suppresses the subversive multiplicity of [any] sexuality that disrupts heterosexual, reproductive and medicojuridical hegemonies" (Butler 1999, 26), effecting an erasure of the subversive potential immanent to society.

Outlining her argument, Butler quotes Nietzsche: " 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (1999,33). However she says later in *Gender Trouble* that, despite her usage of Nietzsche, her work is "not a return to an existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and its acts" (1999, 181). From this counter-essentialist premise she moves on to argue that "gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it purported to be"; ultimately "there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender, [rather] identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (1999, 33). This is the most basic aspect of her theory. The consequences of it are all encompassing. If something we hold so true, absolute and basic to the person is false, all aspects of identity and all ways we understand reality through categorization become suspect.

Butler, thus, offers a radical (re)definition of gender. It becomes "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1999, 44). Not only is this definition intellectually challenging in its consequences, but it also offers the possibility of dismantling the 'highly regulatory frame' (1999, 44). Our gender performances create the *illusion* of a core, hence the term 'performative theory of gender'. The illusionary nature of interior identity is crucial to all of Butler's work, thus its import must be emphasized. It now becomes important to define 'performative'. Butler states that our gendered gestures and enactments "are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (1999, 173 emphasis in original). This suggests that the body itself is already a discursive site. Butler further clarifies this definition, emphasizing the repetitious and ritual nature of performativity, stating, "[as] in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (1999, 178). It is important to note however that our gender performances are limited by what is intelligible in various contexts, but never simply determined. By using the notion of performative, Butler seeks to remind the reader constantly that there is no gendered body that has ontological status apart from the acts or performances that constitute it.

Butler makes a further distinction between performance and performativity in her

later book, *Bodies That Matter* (1993). For her, a performance is a bounded act, for example behaving stereotypically female or male as a one time enactment, whereas performativity "consists in a reiteration of norms which precedes, constrain and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice'" (1993, 234). The idea of repetition, then, is central, precisely because it creates a seeming 'realness' or core identity. The conflation of the singular (and by definition relatively ineffective in shoring up norms) performance with performativity is fallacious.

Basically, she distinguishes between gender as expressive and performative. Traditionally, gendered behaviors have been viewed as expressive of an underlying gender identity, but Butler (re)conceptualizes such acts as being purely performative. Her usage of performativity, and her rejection of expressiveness, are important because the assignment of gender as a 'core' identity or real state of psychological being "precludes an analysis of the political constitution of the gendered subject and its fabricated notions about the ineffable interiority of its sex or of its true identity" (Butler 1999, 174). Thus, Butler's (re)description of gender, by questioning the very genealogy of gender, generates the potential for change.

Gender, then, is constituted by the constant repetition and reiteration of various performances. These include all behaviors, mannerisms and activities coded as male or female. From Butler's theoretical perspective, gender identifications are phantasmatic. If acts previously considered expressions of underlying gender identity are actually what constitutes the very illusion of a stable identity, then the most pressing question is: "Are there forms of repetition that do not constitute a simple imitation, reproduction, and, hence, consolidation of the law (of the heterosexual matrix)?" (Butler 1999, 41). This is a fundamental juncture. Although there is the frightening aspect of losing identities that feminists have relied on for decades for political unity and motivation this question also offers an undeniable hope for change. Asking what particular acts will *not* reproduce and *not* consolidate the laws of binary gender opens up the potential for gender performances that subvert and destabilize current norms and restrictions. To answer this question of rearticulation Butler posits the following:

> The repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories. The replication of heterosexual constructs (of gender) in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but, rather, as copy is to copy. This parodic repetition of the 'original'...reveals the original to be nothing other than a parody of the *idea* of the natural and the original. (Butler 1999,41).

Ultimately, "if the regulatory fictions of sex and gender are themselves multiply contested sites of meaning, then the very multiplicity of their construction holds out the possibility of a disruption on their univocal posturing" (Butler 1999, 43).

I will return to a more complete elaboration of the complexities of Butler's work later in this thesis, as they become relevant to my readings of Heather and Nikki's performances. But I want to briefly touch on why I felt there was the potential for Butler-type, post-structural resistance in these women's performances. Even given the reach of heterosexual hegemony, Butler maintains throughout her various works that there is the

potential for subverting cohersive, violent norms in both normative and nonnormative performances of gender and sexuality. While Nikki and Heather's show was geared at a predominantly heterosexual male audience of a Canadian rock band, I still felt that it demonstrated something potentially subversive.

In the second edition preface to *Gender Trouble*, Butler explicitly asks, "If gender is no longer to be understood as consolidated through normative sexuality, then is there a crisis of gender that is specific to queer contexts?" (1999, xi). Certainly, this crisis of gender, which can trigger the actors questioning of it, is infinitely more likely to occur within the queer context[2] but Butler also goes on to acknowledge this possibility in all people's lives. Butler concedes that "the performance of gender subversion can indicate nothing about sexuality or sexual practice. Gender can be rendered ambiguous without disturbing or reorientating normative sexuality at all" (1999, xiv). Thus "the distribution of hetero-, bi-, and homo-inclinations cannot be predictably mapped onto the travels of gender bending or changing" (Butler 1999, xiv). In acknowledging the potential for subversion in seemingly 'normative' sexualities and contexts, Butler opens the door to vast possibility and various exciting avenues of inquiry. This is what I explore in my project.

Why did this particular case of potential gender subversion warrant further inquiry? There were two reasons. When I first saw Heather and Nikki's performance, it was in concert with a Canadian rock band, but I later found out that this was merely a spin off of their performance art show 'All You Can Eat'. Looking first at the rock show, I felt that the inherent complexity and contradiction of its context would be a fruitful arena of study, as rock "is a form of music that somehow *means* sex" (Frith and Goodwin 1990, 369 emphasis in original). Popular music is one of the highly visible terrains where gender and sexual norms are both reiterated and challenged. Rock has often been characterized as fundamentally misogynist, as Frith and McRobbie explicitly state: "Oppressive images of women are built into the very foundations of the pop/rock edifice: into its production, its consumption, and even into its musical structures" (1990, 378). At the same time, while Butler and subsequent queer theorists may have introduced notions of gender trouble and subversion to the academic imagination, looking only to theoretical sources "belies the extent to which popular music was moving and shaking these ideas along" (Bradby and Laing 2001, 295). Indeed Bradby and Laing ask, "How can we talk of gender as performance and play without acknowledging the songs and videos of Annie Lennox and Madonna in the early and mid-1980s?" (2001, 295).

Certainly popular music is not a monolith extolling only oppressive or inclusive sexual and gender norms, and in these contradictions I felt there was the possibility of binary subversion. Most importantly, I was drawn by the potential of finding subversive play at work in a *popular* venue, one to which mass audiences would have access. For me, this signals the political in the accessible 'everyday'. For those who don't take the 'everyday' as being inherently political, these performances have the possibility of raising questions that audience members may not have considered otherwise. Popular performances that question gender and sexual boundaries seem "to characterize as politically acceptable a phenomena whose progressiveness must be questionable at first glance, because of both the distinctly *cultural*-not to say frivolous-mode of its

[2] Note however that I will address the problematics behind attempting to delineate queer and hetero-normative contexts shortly.

intervention..., which renders it unorthodox as a political undertaking in any event" (Harper 1994, 91). For me, it was both the mass appeal and the sheer unorthodoxy of the venue and Nikki and Heather's performances that fueled my initial interest.

Although I will discuss this further below, I would like to take a moment to give a brief description of the Shocore show I saw and of its 'All You Can Eat' pre-cursor. During Shocore performances, Nikki and Heather come to the forefront of the stage near the beginning of the set and remain in front of the band, flanking the lead singer, throughout much of their performance. When I first saw them, I was suspicious of the messages they were putting out. Eventually, I, like many other female viewers, was won over by the fun abandon of Heather and Nikki's performance. When I first saw them, the most salient part of their performances was their highly sexual behavior and stereotypically feminine appearances. Their costumes consisted of a range of 'feminine' iconographic pieces, including, among other things, Playboy Bunny T-shirts, short plaid skirts and, near the end of the show, pasties. Watching their performances brought to mind go-go dancer performances. However, it was very obvious that there was a great deal of skill and training apparent that normally is not associated with the go-go dancer. Their performances seemed informed by a number of dance traditions but particularly by hip-hop. When they had started with Shocore, who wanted to added a more visual aspect to their live rock show, Nikki and Heather's performances were more free-style dancing but since they have chosen to go with a more choreographed aesthetic. Further, the notion of the go-go dancer brings to mind a sense of a superfluous nature, however Nikki and Heather ore central to the Shocore show. There is some interaction with the band members and near the end of the show Nikki and Heather have a mock dance contest with two of the male band members.

As I mentioned, Heather and Nikki exude an intense sexuality, not only to the audience but also with each other. This sexuality is perfectly at home with the pounding, aggressive sexuality of the live rock music. After my initial skepticism, I was drawn in by the playful joy of their performances. They pull you into the full sensory experience of the concert. The high energy of Nikki and Heather's dancing is overwhelming and fundamentally transforms the concert experience. Their audiences appear to love them.

Throughout the concert, Heather and Nikki's dances are choreographed to compliment the live rock music, but as the show progresses their performances become more parodic and playful. In addition to the mock dance contest, they start to interact with the audience more as well. Near the end, they spit 'beer', which is actually water in beer bottles, all over themselves and the audience and shoot water guns at them. At one point, Nikki hold the water gun as though it is a penis and 'ejaculates'. Ultimately, I was seduced by the joyful playfulness of their high energy, highly sexual performances.

The 'All You Can Eat' show, which preceded their Shocore performances, is definitely more 'performance art-like'. The core group consists of four women and one man, although, except for Nikki and Heather, who produce the shows, membership is variable. Rather than being part of the concert curcuit, this show is performed primarily in both gay and straight local nightclubs and similar adult venues. They often perform

with various other performers, one of their favorites being a fire juggler. The show brings to mind the burlesque use of sex and humor to entertain adult audiences.

> *Elizabeth Nolan wrote in a review of 'All You Can Eat':*
> *The scene, a steamy night at the Station Street Theatre, last March. Five sultry vixens prance onto the stage wearing short negligees in varying degrees of see-throughness, with high-heeled boots. Singing along to Peggy Lee's 'Hey Big Spender,' the girls proceed with a dance number filled with panty-showing high kicks, girl on girl ass-grinding and spanking. There is crotch grabbing and boob shaking galore. (2001, 11)*

This show consists of a number of very separate, specific dance numbers to a variety of pre-recorded songs, ranging from fast and slow selections, rock music, pop rock and hip hop. I say that this show is more 'performance art-like' in the sense that, relative to the Shocore show, theatrics and acting are more central to the show. There seemed to be a great deal more attention paid to their costumes, in order to reflect the songs they are performing to. The parodic comedy of the numbers is more salient, particularly in pieces where they mock the Spice Girls and similar popular icons. Rather than describing specific numbers here, I will be bringing these in below as they become illustrative of my poststructural analysis of Nikki and Heather's performances.

As mentioned previously, in its original context, the women's show was a performance art piece called 'All You Can Eat'. The specifically staged presentations of gender and sexuality signaled another potentially productive avenue of inquiry. Indeed, stage was one of the major venues where second-wave feminists of the sixties and seventies sought to deconstruct gender (Reinelt 1989, 49). I concur with Egervary, in her assertion, "[performance] art is proving to be one of the most dynamic forms in which women can create, control and produce their work without artistic constraint" (1998, 29). Further, "the representation of the subject-in-process practicing resistance, exploding the straightjacket of gender through doing the 'work' of self-inscription on stage, before an audience, is both theoretically and practically a vital, imaginative, political act" (Reinelt 1989, 52). Although, these performances arguably don't have the mass appeal of rock, they can still elicit questions for their own audiences. The artistic component, present in both the rock and performance art contexts, is invaluable "because of the way we respond to art with our senses, emotions, imagination, and understanding, all in interplay" (Mullin 2000, 127). In this interplay, unlimited imaginative possibilities are opened up by people's various readings of any artistic creation.

Although I have delineated two separate contexts in which I saw their performances, it is important to note that both Heather and Nikki expressed the continuity between the rock and art venues. Shortly after beginning the interviews, I found out that the rock performance I had seen had actually been preceded by the 'All You Can Eat' formulation. Shocore, the rock band with whom they had been performing, had seen the performance art piece, liked what they saw and hired Nikki and Heather to liven up their

own show by adding a more visual aspect (Transcript Two, lines 31-7)[3]. In essence, Heather and Nikki "just took the basic...stuff of 'All You Can Eat' and applied it to [Shocore]" (Transcript Two, lines 34-5). For Nikki, the main element of difference was the live musical accompaniment, but otherwise maintained, "as far as dancing for 'All You Can Eat' and for Shocore I felt it was just the same you know" (Two, lines 43-46). The differences and similarities between the Shocore and 'All You Can Eat' perfromances will be explored in greater depth later, when I offer a reading of their performances as radically subversive of gender and sexual boundaries, but it useful to bear in mind that in both rock and performance art contexts the women had complete artistic control, which likely accounts for the continuity of their experience.

Briefly, I would like to say that from the post-structural perspective I use to read their performances this notion of 'complete artistic control' becomes suspect. While I will elaborate on this below, particularly in the *Ambivalent Perfromances* section, I would like to say that all the decisions we make on a daily basis, from what clothes we choose to wear to how we behave, are always constituted by dominant discourse. In this sense, Nikki and Heather can never *actually* be in 'complete control' of their creative endeavors. Like all our other choices and actions, how they decide to shape their productions will always be limited and constituted by a variety of discourses. These acts of choosing, as will be discussed, are only *apparent* acts of choosing and are to a large degree delimited but never determined.

There is one final reason I was intrigued by Nikki and Heather's performance. I identified with them as female dancers. Now I must qualify this statement with my own positioning. Certainly, I do not have the extensive training that both Heather and Nikki have had but I have always held popular, public dance as my most valued past time. I make a connection here between popular and choreographed dancing. By doing this I do not want to detract from the training, discipline and talent necessary to perform as Nikki and Heather do, but only seek to conceptualize the relationship as a continuum of activity. I saw these women up on stage expressing themselves personally and sexually in an open and frank manner. I have always felt powerful and in control on the public dance floor, and I have been intrigued by what Leslie Gotfrit names as the elements of both submission and domination intrinsic to partnered dancing (Gotfrit 1989, 2). I saw in Heather and Nikki the same things, albeit on a grander scale. Many women flirt with a 'good girl' boundary line when dancing on the public dance floor but Nikki and Heather shattered that line. It was not until I began exploring this thesis topic that I really began to consider the subversive potential of myself and other women taking up public space on the dance floor (Gotfrit 1989, 2). Gotfrit points out the connection between dance and female pleasure, arguing, "dance is one, although limited, site for many women to experience pleasure, sensuality, self-expression and control" (1989, 5). Doubtless, the issues surrounding both the potential and limitations of women's public dance as subversion is a complex and tangled affair, but I will explore this in greater depth during my analysis of Heather and Nikki's performances.

Most basically, to the question of why I was drawn to this performance, I can really only say that, even knowing very little about the show, I had a gut feeling that there was something there that warranted further elucidation. Vasterling writes,

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[3] For much of the analysis in this thesis, I am relying on two separate interviews I did with Nikki and Heather. However, I will expand on my methodology and on the specific interviews below.

> [the] nagging feeling or awareness of something we cannot put into words is nothing unusual. This fact of everyday life implies that the range of accessibility is wider than, though not independent of, the range of intelligibility. Whereas the latter more or less coincides with our linguistic capacities, the former indicates that these capacities do not (fully) determine our awareness or contact with reality. (1999, 23)

I agree with this statement and feel that it was my ability to imagine potential alternatives to current hegemonic relations of gender and sex that made the women's performances stand out for me. This is not to say that there is something essentially or inherently subversive about the performances, but only that I sensed a potential for a Butleresque reconfiguration of gender.

Ultimately, one could say that my so-called gut reaction was both right and wrong. As will be discussed throughout the body of the thesis, I do believe I found a site of resistive practice, however, the resistance did not turn out to be where I expected it. When I first began thinking about this project, I was very much, despite the explicit warnings of my thesis committee, looking for the proverbial "doer". In the preface to *Bodies That Matter*, Butler specifically addresses the common, seemingly intentional, misreadings her work has engendered, stating:

> [for] if I argued that genders are performative, that could mean that I thought that one woke in the morning, perused the closet or some more open space for the gender of choice, donned that gender for the day, and then restored the garment to its place at night. Such a willful and instrumental subject, one who decides *on* its gender, is clearly not its gender from the start and fails to realize that its existence is already decided *by* gender. Certainly, such a theory would restore a figure of a choosing subject–humanist–at the center of a project whose emphasis on construction seems to be quite opposed to such a notion (1993, x).

My positionally mediated misunderstandings of Butler's work are what fostered my mistaken search for the doer, my assumption that Heather and Nikki had specific and intentional (feminist) political goals. As a thoroughly modernist, feminist subject (and here I use the term 'subject' intentionally), well-versed in issues of (modernist) feminist agency, I could scarcely imagine a political endeavor that was not well laid out and intentional, which seemed the only way to ensure efficacy. I, firmly entrenched in sociological and modernist feminist conventions, generally understand the notion of agency as being ontologically prior to social action, which Butler vehemently rejects (1999). I felt that their 'performance' of gender and sexuality on the stage might provide the critical space from which they could see the constitutive nature of such gendered acts and behaviors. Admittedly, I want(ed) to find gender and sexual minorities that identify themselves as such and make efforts to eradicate their delegitimization. The complexities and contradictions that I found instead will be considered at length later in this paper, but I feel it is necessary to first explore the position from which I began to approach this thesis.

While I definitely began looking for two feminist doers, there was also an openness in my guiding research questions. Rather than using a deductive approach with Butler's theory as a starting platform, I wanted to instead to see if I could *use* Butler's theory of gender performativity and gender trouble to *read* these performances. I asked,

what do 'subjects' (my misusage) that appear to be more readable from a poststructural perspective, as opposed to an essentialist modernist one, have/want to say for themselves? While I certainly did not find what I expected about poststructurally read positions, both Nikki and Heather had plenty to say about themselves, their performances and their subjectivities.

Interestingly, my initial readings of their performances were very much in contrast to how both Nikki and Heather saw them. I feel that the openness I encouraged in this project enabled me to see my initial reading as highly divergent and as such was invaluable. When I first saw their performances I definitely had some preconceptions. Seeing them perform with an all-male rock band, and given my expectation of most male rock performances as being exclusionist and misogynist, it seems in retrospect that I was less open to the subversive potential of Heather and Nikki's performances. I definitely felt that something interesting was occurring in their performances, but, to be honest, I felt that it was most likely occurring in what I perceived at the time as their hyper-femininity. In this sense, I likened their performances to drag, where the conventional markers of femininity are hyperbolic and extravagant. Once I started talking with Heather, I began to see how I had limited their performances, focusing on certain aspects of the show to the exclusion of other aspects, where they were portraying stereotypically masculine behaviors as well. After describing how I viewed the performances as hyper-feminine, Heather pointed out instances where that was not the case at all: "I'm just thinking of things like, at the last number...we fill beer bottles with water and spit on the audience, I, that's not feminine" (Transcript One, lines 498-500). She later goes on to clarify, "I don't think we were trying to be ultra-feminine or we wouldn't have done that, we were just trying to be able to do whatever we wanted to do and not worry about the cliché of what girls are suppose to look like and do" (lines 617-619).

The Butler-informed poststructural framework and its characteristic conceptual fluidity opened up space from which I saw that while these women's subjectivities and performances were unlike anything I expected, there was definitely a poststructural type of subjectivity apparent. Once this became apparent, a secondary goal of my thesis became examining some of the political strengths and weaknesses of such subjectivities, generated by women's specific experiences. The dichotomy that has often been set up between, on the one hand, the prediscursive humanist subject and agency of modernist feminism and, on the other hand, Butler's discursively constituted entity without political intention, fails to account for the complexities of these women's lived experiences.

I would also like to address one further conceptual weakness I eventually saw in my work. I began this project with the hope that I could somehow 'apply' Butler's resistive politics, which have most often been examined within minority sexual practices such a drag, to a 'nonqueer' or 'heterosexual' context. I think I undertheorized my concept of 'heterosexual' space, basing my assumptions about what was happening on *who* the audience was, failing to acknowledge that, regardless of who might be watching, something 'queer' (in the disruptive political sense) might be occurring on stage, or that further, assuming that people of normative gender and sexual performatives could not possibly see anything other than a reinscription of normative boundaries. Once I actually spoke with Heather and Nikki, I found that what actually characterized all their performances, in 'All You Can Eat' and with Shocore, was slippage between the queer/ nonqueer delimiter.

As was discussed above, both women felt that their performances, regardless of the Shocore or 'All You Can Eat' labels, were generally fairly similar. I thought this was interesting giving that 'All You Can Eat' is performed in both gay and straight clubs, while Shocore targets a predominantly heterosexual audience. Given my misguided ideas about what constituted static hetero or queer space, I would have expected the 'All You Can Eat' performances to be experienced by the women as more queer, based on the audience. Not only did both women express a sense of continuity but through both interviews Heather and Nikki reinforced the idea that rather than remaining statically differentiated, any notions of queer and nonqueer or heterosexual space often collapsed into one another. Nikki's identification and performance as bisexual remained consistent throughout both shows. Heather identifies as heterosexual but she also performs a variety of sexual subjectivities as well. Regarding this fluidity, Nikki said:

> I think it just makes us like, ah, it gives our show a little bit more, um, spectrum, you know what I mean, where we can be straight or we can be gay or we can be mad or psycho or crazy or horny, you know what I mean. I think being able to be anything or being able to or willing to accept that you're anything or could be anything is like, I think that pretty much rounds out our show. Makes our show good, you know what I mean, is that we go to a straight club and we, you know, I eat Heather's ass and you know, we, you know what I mean, we get crazy and people like whoa, and then we go to like gay clubs and we do straight, you know, girl, guy and then people like, you know what I mean, but I mean, that's for the fun of it, right, to show them what they don't usually see, right? (Trancript Two, lines 218-227).

First, its important to note that this figurative 'eating Heather's ass' is something they do every show (Transcript Two, lines 358-359), so there's a breakdown of both normative sexual boundaries and public sexual display in every performance, regardless of the audience. Not surprisingly, Nikki's identification as bisexual is salient in all their performances. At one point she says to me, "look at these girls [pointing at a picture], they're hot"... "I watch (the other 'All You Can Eat' performers) and I'm like, I get turned on by all of them because I see, you know, they're so strong and bold, you know, and that's sexy to me and that turns me on" (Transcript Two, lines 627-637). In her very experience of the various shows as homosensual and homoerotic there is a disruptive quality that transcends context.

Another exciting issue made apparent by Nikki's comment is their attempt to push the sexual boundaries of all people, regardless of self-defined sexual orientation. Heather concurs, here, saying, "if we're doing a gay crowd we don't necessarily choose to show that some of us are gay or show girl and girl or guy and guy it's just if that comes about in the show whereas we would just censor it quicker for a straight audience" (Transcript One, lines 894-897). Performing straight or gay and, more importantly, not limiting themselves to any particular configuration therein exposes the weaknesses of my attempts to delineate queer and nonqueer space, while highlighting the relative queerness of *all* their performative contexts. For both of them, the disruptive element of the show appears regardless of context, though they do then limit and or encourage varying degrees of gender and sexual trouble depending on their reading of the audience.

Rather than tracing my movement throughout this project as an inevitable

progression towards Truth, a shift from my misguided, modernist and most importantly, wrong, reading of post-structuralism to a more enlightened, correct reading, I think it is better seen as an openness to surprise, which I hope characterized my research. This openness to surprise, the attitude of flexibility in approach and conceptualization I took, seems to have allowed a more nuanced read to come out of my work. Specifically, the theoretical notions of agency and political subjectivity that I went into the research with, like many modernist constructions, failed to hold up once their relevance in the material lives of these women was examined. It was the imbued stability of these notions that turned out to be fallacious. While they may have been useful grounding notions from which to proceed, ultimately these research frames were productively shattered.

After a brief methodological consideration, I would like to move directly into the main body of research. First, I will take Heather and Nikki's stage performances as illustrative of radical attempts to breakdown gender and sexual boundaries. For this section I will not be taking up the issue of their intentions or experiences, but will simply rely on my own readings of their performances. This is an admittedly limited approach, but I have chosen to direct my attention fully to issues surrounding intention in a subsequent section. I do this, first, for conceptual ease and second, so that I can give the complexities and contradictions I found just consideration. At this point, I will also elaborate on how I see Butler's notions of agency and Foucauldian power as allowing a productive reading of these performances. In the last section, I will sift through the various strengths and weakness that I see as resulting from poststructural, and therefore malleable, subjectivities. Specifically, I will be arguing for a transversal of the diametrical opposition that conventionally characterizes the relationship between the constructions of the modernist agent and the post-structural, citational being, seeing such an approach as the most productive approach to enacting political change in this late-modernist period, where identity politics still remain the hegemonic form of political intervention.

Getting at the Performances

Once I had seen Heather and Nikki's performances, I had to decide how exactly I wanted to get at what their performances meant to them. The idea that guided my entire approach to this research project was a commitment to openness. I wanted a malleable research methodology that did not limit either myself, Nikki or Heather as we, collectively, explored their performances. This 'open' approach demanded that I use what has traditionally been called an inductive approach. Rather than redescribing Butler's work and reformulating it into questions that I could ask the women, in order to gauge how they felt Butler's theoretical constructions applied to their lives, I wanted to hear their thoughts and feelings about their performances without any heavily inscribed theoretical limitation. As I am relying on Butler, there are some deep complexities, particularly regarding her notions of the 'subject' and agency, which will be discussed later, that would have made such a deductive scenario completely unfeasible.

I wanted to remain attuned to what Nikki and Heather had to say in their own words and to learn what they thought was most important about their performances. Doubtless, I cannot ignore the fact that I had read much of Butler's theoretical work prior to speaking with Heather and Nikki and must acknowledge that this fact inevitably gave some degree of shape to the project, but I made specific effort to avoid 'conceptual imperialism' (Stanley and Wise 1983, 163). By remaining attuned to my previous knowledge of Butler and my desire to ultimately bring in her theories, I hope to have limited these effects. I am optimistic, specifically because of the misreadings of Butler with which I went into the project and how it was actually in discussion with Nikki and Heather that their own constructions of their performances gave me clarification and insight into what Butler was saying. I cannot claim to have eliminated all the influence of my preliminary theoretical goals, but through attention to how such an occurrence is inescapable, I hope to have limited and accounted for my preconceptions.

In order to remain open and to allow for the participants' ideas to come out of the research, I chose an unstructured interview method. Here, I primarily relied on Mishler's (1986) approach to unstructured interviews. Had I chose to use a structured interview, formulated from Butler's work, I would have been "[attempting] to avoid rather than to confront directly the interrelated problems of context, discourse, and meaning" (Mishler 1986, 27). My reliance on the unstructured interview treats the issues of context, discourse and meaning not as problems but as interesting and productive sources of complexity. The structured interview hides complexity and nuance, fundamentally limiting any research project that attempts to privilege what the participants themselves have to offer. This approach stands in stark contrast to much positivistic research that privileges the theoretical constructs that guide the project. The basic goal of the unstructured or in-depth interview is to maximize description and discovery (Reinharz 1992, 18) by eliciting rich, textured material from which a subsequent qualitative analysis can flow (Mishler 1986, 27). Following Stanley and Wise's recommendations I tried to broach all the topics I desired while remaining flexible and open to any and all other directions Heather and Nikki wanted to take (Stanley and Wise 1983, 67).

Following Mishler, I have treated the interviews as a speech event or activity, which "marks the fundamental contrast between the standard antilinguistic, stimulus-response model and [this] alternative approach to interviewing as discourse between

speakers" (1986, 35-36). Having an unstructured interview, or what I saw as a guided conversation, with Heather and Nikki allowed me to address issues of contextuality and meaning. The openness of the unstructured interview allows room for clarification on both Nikki and Heather's and my own part. Due to the complexities of experience, I wanted space within which they and I could negotiate mutual clarification and agreed upon meaning. While I chose to use the general unstructured interview format, I specifically chose to take a feminist orientation towards this endeavor.

Graham argues, "the use of [unstructured] interviews has become the *principal means* by which feminists have sought to achieve the active involvement of their respondents in the construction of data about their lives" (1984, n.p.) and this active participation was my main goal. Eventually I ended up with a feminist interview-based methodology, the express goal of which was to encourage and privilege openness and flexibility. This approach allowed me access to Nikki and Heather's experiences, feelings and thoughts through their own words; as Reinharz points out, "[this] asset is particularly important for the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women" (1992, 19). This is an undeniably important issue, but, for myself, the most invaluable aspect of a feminist approach to the unstructured interview is its attention to relations of power and inequality.

In order to create an interview environment that enabled care and respect, with the intention of remaining attentive to power imbalances between researcher and participant, I felt that, despite the fact that Heather and Nikki live in Vancouver and I in Edmonton, a face to face interview was absolutely essential. A phone interview did not even appear to be an option, first, because of the increased possibility of miscommunication and second, because I wanted to built rapport with both Heather and Nikki. Only face to face contact would allow for the possibility of mutual trust and comfort.

I hoped that encouraging trust and respect in our interactions would help me to understand what Nikki and Heather were willing to share with me. Here, I was "focusing less on getting one's questions answered and more on understanding the interviewee" (Reinharz 1992, 24). I knew there was more value in what they wanted to tell me than in my preconceived ideas about their performances. Only after listening attentively, in hopes of gathering all I could, did I want to use Butler's theories to read what I had been offered. In the end, I hope to present throughout the rest of this thesis an analysis of their performances that negotiates their privileged views of their performances with my own conclusions about them, which have been mediated through Butler's theoretical work.

This issue of the interviewer/participant relationship is foundationally important in qualitative research and I would like to address it further. I wanted to avoid the hierarchical relationship that often pervades the research context. I went into the interviews *knowing* that Heather and Nikki were the experts on their experiences, thoughts and feelings. I was there to listen and to explore particular issues with them, but I made efforts to ensure, and make them aware, that I wanted them to control the interviews. I still had certain pre-determined topics that I wanted to discuss but I made it clear at the beginning of both interviews that they could 'take off' wherever they wanted, that we would discuss anything they felt relevant, they had the option to not discuss anything they were uncomfortable with and that any of my questions were open for reformulation and clarification. In essence, I looked at them as my guides to learning

more about their experiences. In addition to my early clarification, I also opened the interviews up at the end to anything they wanted to address that I had missed or to anything else they wanted to tell me.

The relationships developed through an interview are never merely hierarchical or in any predetermined configuration. As Mishler points out, "[one] way an interview develops is through mutual reformation and specification of questions, by which they take on particular and context-bound shades of meaning" (1986, 53). In this sense the interview is a circular process, based on the joint construction of meaning. While the potential for researcher domination must be addressed, this inequality is never predetermined and relationships are always negotiated between the participants.

As discussed in the introduction what I initially sought and thought I would find was highly divergent from what Nikki and Heather actually shared with me. I attribute this directly to Heather's wonderful undisciplined, non-compliance. The struggles over meaning that did occur only occurred in the first interview with Heather. I did the interview with Nikki second, and by this time I had realized the essential need for me to hand over complete control to the true experts. The various meanings and experience that I understood Heather had taken out of her performances certainly were the result of much mutual reformation and clarification. More accurately, it was a matter of me forcing myself to largely abandon the preconception of the feminist doer behind these performances and instead to pay attention to how Heather had constructed the meanings and experiences surrounding her performances. It is important to note that, as relatively public figures, both Nikki and Heather were more likely to have experienced the type of situation where they had to verbally represent their performances and selves to others. Undoubtedly, this had the effect of balancing out the potentially hierarchical researcher-participant relationship.

It became glaringly evident early on in Heather's interview that the notion of the 'passive research subject' simply was not applicable. At one point we were discussing some comedic aspects of their show 'All You Can Eat', which Heather saw as making fun of 'girl clichés' (Transcript One, lines 219-226). In response to her description, I try to clarify what exactly this comedy means to her:

B: Do you, is the comedy sort of a safe way to do that…
H: Hmm
B: …like a safe vehicle of critique or?
H: Umm, I don't know, I think it's just to switch it up cause we like doing so many, I think it's just more interesting if it, if the energy level goes up and down and stuff and if we do some serious number where, whatever we're doing, I think it's just more interesting, I think that's why we do it. And that's, yeah, I just think it's more interesting, that's why we…
B: Ok
H: …go that route. And the mocking it, I just think, may/ some people might not even see, see it come across that way, I mean, that's just my point of view, you know what I mean…
B: Yes, oh yeah.
H: …but um, but yeah I I don't know what the real reason, it's just cause, you know, that's what we'll find funny at the time or that's what suits a song and it's just to switch it

up, to keep the show interesting…
B: Umhm
H: …from serious to sexy to funny to, you know?
B: So, is your intention to entertain? Um, or is it maybe to be critical or is it to be make money? {chuckles}
H: See…
B: Like what?
H: …no, we definitely don't make enough money.
B: {laughs}
H: But um, it's not, it's not to be critical, I don't think, well personally I'm not trying to make some big Statement…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …I really am not but I think, it's basically just to entertain you and it's for us to enjoy it…But it's just, yeah, it's basically to entertain and and then if you want to make a statement here and there you can…

(Transcript One, lines 259-295)

This particularly pained interaction where both of us are struggling to clarify meaning for both ourselves and for the other person illustrates this joint construction of meaning, not to mention my initial, misguided assumption of a privileged agency. Further, it is representative of what I saw as a general respect and relative equality (although I will discuss issues of representation below) that was present throughout both interviews.

Many feminist researchers have emphasized the need for researchers to share general cultural patterns with the participants (Reinharz 1992, 25). While I would not say that this is always essential, as such insistence may limit research with various minority groups and thereby perpetuate silence, I felt that this commensurability of life experience definitely characterized our interactions. Indeed, I felt a deep sense of camaraderie with both Heather and Nikki, which seemed mutual. After the first interview with Heather, I remember thinking that she had exposed so many of her views and beliefs to me, resulting in a sense of closeness. I felt like hugging her but I realized that this closeness might only be felt by me and did not want to make Heather uncomfortable. But interestingly, and to my validative delight, after Nikki's interview, she actually hugged me, which I attributed to the fact that I considered her, based on our brief meetings, to be a generally more expressive person than Heather or I. By sheer virtue of my clearly evident interest and my traveling to Vancouver to talk with them, they seemed to consider me an equal or an 'insider' with whom they would share their experiences and meaning constructions.

More important than any sense of closeness, a mutual respect was evidenced in Heather's willingness to fight to make me to listen to what she was trying to say, rather than acquiescing to my own constructions of their performances. Central to these relational issues is the possibility of exploitation in the research context. I would never underemphasize how vital they were to the thesis, as I quite inarticulately tried to express near the end of Nikki's interview (Transcript Two, lines 870-890), but I also remained attentive throughout to my ethical responsibility to not exploit their lives. Again, it seems that their public nature altered the potential for exploitation. Both Heather and Nikki seemed as excited about talking to me as I was about talking to them. They were both

active and eager participants. I hoped that ultimately I would not be exploiting their work but actually promoting what I see as their own intellectual property.

While, generally, these interviews highlight the weaknesses of hierarchical oppositional thinking, such as the divisions often made between active researcher and passive subject, it must also be acknowledge that in some ways I, as researcher, have some fundamental, inescapable control over the project. In particular, my control over the design of the research, how I end up analyzing their performances and interviews, and even what I ultimately choose to include and exclude are all salient issues (Marcia Marx 2001, 131). These issues of (re)presentation are made all the more complex and unsettling by the nature of the public performance. As Phelan articulates, "[performance's] only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance... Performance's being...becomes itself through disappearing" (1993, 146). She argues that the effort to write about a performance inevitably rewrites and alters the performance (148). I cannot argue this point or propose that I offer a 'good', 'valid' (re)presentation of Heather and Nikki's performances, but simply want to draw these complexities to the reader's attention.

I recognize that while we may have been relatively successful in destabilizing various power hierarchies during the interviews, it is eventually my constructions of what they had to say that have made it into this thesis. Indeed, Harper asserts that any attempted underwriting of subjectivity is dubious, as many forms of (re)presentation, in both their technical and social functions, "[serve] the promotion of the *auteur's* subjectivity, rather than, and at the expense of, that of the individuals understood to be the 'subject(s)'" (1994, 98). While my work differs from the documentaries he is commenting on, in my lack of direct financial interest in the 'success' or acceptance of my work as a valid (re)presentation, my interests are still vested in this thesis as a building block of my eventual academic career. Following a Butler-informed poststructuralism makes it impossible for me to deny my own position within relations of power and exploitation. However, she also acknowledges that while considering the "subject position of the critic", this "implication of the terms of criticism in the field of power is *not* the advent of a nihilistic relativism incapable of furnishing norms, but, rather, the very precondition of a politically engaged critique" (1992, 6 emphasis in original). I hope that this recognition of nonobjective analysis is seen as a virtue rather than a weakness, as I believe it has made me "more likely to work productively with the complex and heterogeneous nature of the problems that characterize our social realities" (Kaufman 1994, 58).

Before moving on, I would like to address a few last details about the research approach. I tape-recorded the interviews, which were each approximately seventy minutes long. When transcribing them, I tried to keep in mind the question of whether one can 'clean up' an interview without losing the contextual meaning or the speaker's intent. I tried to be true to the informal quality of the interviews, including repeated words, incorrect words and various other idiosyncratic speech patterns. I also tried to capture as much nonverbal communication by including sighs, hesitancies, overlapping comments, particular emphases on different words and particular emphases within words. I lay out all these efforts in the legend following the interviews in Appendices A and B.

In general I tried to be faithful to the interview experience, but I must admit that it was relatively easy since both women were comfortable, articulate and seemed to enjoy speaking about their performances.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that there are, of course, several potential problems in the in-depth unstructured interview (Gaskell 2000, 38-56). Most significantly, I, as the interviewer, was relying on the women to provide a full, detailed account of actions that occurred at another time. Such accounts always have the capacity for inaccuracy and misinformation, but it remains unlikely that Heather or Nikki intentionally fabricated their experiences. For this research, the issue of deception did not appear to be relevant. I completely trust the accounts both offered of their personal experiences and saw little motivation for them to mislead me. Interestingly, their accounts were surprisingly similar, even though Heather had specifically mentioned in her interview that their views might differ significantly.

In the end I can only hope that my efforts to be cognizant to power relations, attentions to my own positioning as vested interviewer and my basic respect for Nikki and Heather as experts on their experiences all lead to a more nuanced, complex reading of their performances as read through Butler's theoretical framework.

Radical Performances

"So even if something's really serious it's still kinda funny, you know what I mean?"
Nikki (transcript Two, lines 827-28).

Here I would like to offer a reading of Heather and Nikki's performances as a radical example of the "gender trouble" Butler recommends. As will be discussed in the subsequent section, there are a mass of complexities and contradictions that inhibit and undermine this 'purely-radical' reading. However, for analytic ease, I will first show their performances as breaking down gender and sexual boundaries through a Butleresque politics of humor and incongruence. Their performances line up with other public examples of women acting up, such as Riot Grrrl, Madonna, Courtney Love and the Guerrilla Girls. I will subsequently explore the complexities I see below this surface reading.

In many of her works, Butler offers various drag performances as one concrete method of gender subversion or disruption. She specifically argues that any drag performance displays three contingent dimensions of corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. Conventionally, these three separate aspects of gendered experience have a heterosexual coherence and fictive unity. Thus, "*in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*" (Butler 1999, 175 emphasis in original). Drag is a parody that negates the notion of an original gender by showing that all such displays (including hetero-normative) are imitative. 'Real' or intelligible genders, which follow the sex/gender/desire prescriptions, are not originals, but merely repetitive attempts to reach impossible norms. This notion of comedic failure (in the Derridian sense) is key to Butler's theoretical framework. The sense of comedy comes from the realization that *no one* will ever embody the prescribed ideals of gender and sexual performance. For Butler, "laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived" (1999, 176). We are all in constant failure, hence our need to keep repeating and reiterating our performances, in the never realizable *hope* that we will perfect our performances and recuperate our failures. Drag is a potential site of subversion because it problematizes gender performance, it reveals its three contingent aspects, and it questions authenticity.

The central role of drag in Butler's political scheme is readily evident, but in her later work, she goes on to argue that drag is not the perfect subversion of standing gender constructions (1993). Drag is potentially successful in calling norms into question because it exposes the contingency and separation of anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. However, Butler admits that exposing this fictive naturalness is no guarantee that there will be a subversion. "Heterosexuality can augment its hegemony through its denaturalization, as when we see denaturalizing parodies that reidealize heterosexual norms *without* calling them into question" (1993, 231 emphasis in original). This insight is important in two specific ways. First, Butler is acknowledging both the subversive and reinscriptive aspects of all political interventions. Second, by refusing to rely on non-normative drag performances as paradigmatic of gender trouble, she opens up the possibility that subversion can be enacted in a range of contexts. For this thesis I

will focus on the context of Nikki and Heather's performances.[4]

Heather and Nikki's work is a productive site of gender and sexual subversion. I read their performances as instances when:

> the *reality* of gender is also put into crisis: it becomes unclear how to distinguish the real from the unreal. And this is [an] occasion in which we come to understand that what we take to be 'real,' what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact a changeable and revisable reality. Call it subversion or call it something else. (Butler 1999, xxiii emphasis in original)

When I first saw their performances, I thought that Heather and Nikki's performative radicality was in their expression of hyper-femininity, so that they illustrated that gender is something 'put' on and performed instead of being an essential core of the individual. After discussing their shows with them, I now believe that the actual subversive potential comes from their public performances of both feminine and stereotypically masculine performatives. For Heather, these instances of 'cross-over' were very important. At one point I expressed how I had seen their Shocore performances as embodying hyper-feminine and hypersexual aesthetics. Heather clarified that in their performances they:

> just loosen up and so things happen and I mean sometimes it was obviously trying to be very feminine but I think sometime being on stage or even if we were moving sexually, I mean that's how I express myself, um, like even just like sticking your tongue out or just like being a little bit harsh would come out (Transcript One, lines 476-79)

> Some feelings I've had up there on stage is feminine but sometimes I feel total testosterone and 'rah' and spitting and {sticks out tongue} and that in that sense is not ultra-feminine in my opinion (lines 581-83).

For Butler the very goal of gender trouble is "to open up within the very terms of [our] matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder" (1999, 24). Nikki and Heather are on stage showing a wide range of audiences the vast discrepancies between what women are purported to be and what they actually can be/are. Their refusals to be confined to gender prescriptives are radically troublesome. Such performances constitute

> an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopia beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely those constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity (Butler 1999, 44).

Here, where the disaggregation and fluidity of performances "disrupt the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence, it seems the expressive model loses its descriptive force" (Butler 1999, 173). Nikki and Heather's performances, similar to drag, show that gender is, at its basis, not an expression of some essentialist, prediscursive core but

[4] I will specifically be concentrating on their 'All You Can Eat' performances, so when I am referring to the Shocore performances I will be sure to indicate this.

merely an 'act', and thus open to disassembly, parody, and hyperbolic expression as a means of deconstructing its naturalist assumptions (Butler 1999, 187).

Many have accused Butler of remaining "narrowly focused on subjectification, a privileging of the moment (even if it is repeated over and over) in which discourse encloses or subjugates a person's identity" (Nelson 1999, 332). However, it is at this very moment of constant (re)signification that Heather and Nikki's performances are successful in (re)working the discourses they use to articulate themselves. Their success is their ability to illustrate the phantasmatic nature of oppositional, hierarchical gender and sexual constructions. Nelson assumes that "[subjects] continually perform identities that are prescribed by hegemonic discourse" (1999, 336). In some sense, she is correct, but Nikki and Heather's (re)iterative performances are not limited to this false sense of determinism. Their performances are deliberate (mis)performances. As such, they are celebrations of the constantly available moment of rupture beyond (re)iterative (re)citation of gender and sexual normative discourses. As Hood-Williams and Harrison state, these performances reveal gender as "performative, defined as a stylized repetition of acts which, following Austin, bring into being the effect of gender and whose power derives not from a pre-existing ontological subject but, via Derrida, from the citation of conventions and as a performative use of discourse" (1998, 82). The radical potential of Heather and Nikki's performances emerge from their varied usage of conventional discourses.

There is a similar potential for subversion in both drag and performance art. Butler comments that, in her own understanding of post-humanist endeavors, one major project "is to call into question the ways in which such 'examples' and 'paradigms' serve to subordinate and erase that which they seek to explain" (1992, 5). This openness is a strength of Butler's work. Acknowledging that she does not have *the* answer(s) to dismantling violent gender and sexual norms opens up the possibility of exploring and potentially finding a range of instances and endeavors that trouble gender. One could question my efforts to 'bring' Butler into the 'hetero' world. However, this insistence on delineating the realms of queer and nonqueer or queer and 'straight' is both fallacious and impossible. Denying the potential for subversion in more conventional gender and sexual discourses than drag misconstrues Butler's clarification that subversion is enabled but not determined by the (re)iteration of conventional citations of meaning. Further, the denial of subversive, queer politics in a show with diverse mass appeal, such as the Shocore performances, denies the fact that we are all complicit in the perpetuation of violent gender and sexual exclusion. Power understood as a coherent, unidirectional force that those invested in the continuation of violence exert on those who are excluded from dominant discourse limits potential avenues of resistance. Butler's theory of power, derived from Foucault, is much less reductive and much more productive.

Performance art is unique "because of the way we respond to art with all our senses, emotions, imagination, and understanding, all in interplay" (Mullin 2000, 127). Public performances have the potential for deep impact on the audience "due to the way in which they replace our habitual ways of looking at the world with more lively and more ambiguous metaphors." They demand that "we shake off our stale ways of looking at things, or begin to look at issues and ideas we had not previously" (130-131). Most importantly, as both Butler and Mullin emphasize, the outcomes of such forms of political intervention are not predictable. They proliferate into an infinite number of

perspectives. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution", Butler extols the virtues of the public stage as a liminal space, where room is made for gender subversion that may not be available in other venues (1990, 278). McKenzie defines the stage performance as liminal in the sense that it is "a mode of embodied activity whose spatial, temporal and symbolic 'betweenness' allows for dominant social norms to be suspended, questioned, played with, transformed" (1998, 218). Butler refers specifically to transvestite performances in "Performative Acts", but her argument can easily be expanded to encompass all gender (mis)performances. She cautiously suggests:

> Gender performances in non-theatrical contexts are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions...Indeed, the sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the sight of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence...On the street or on the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed, on the street or the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality; the disquieting effect of the act is that there are no conventions that facilitate making this separation (1990, 278).

It is this artistic freedom or liminality that has the potential of opening up questions in the minds of theatrical audience members. The stage performance has the 'room' to "expose heterosexuality as an incessant and *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized idealization" and further, "[that] heterosexuality is always in the act of elaborating itself is evidence that it is perpetually at risk, that is, that it 'knows' its own possibility of coming undone" (Butler 1991, 23).

While women on stage as spectacle is by no means a new concept, there is an undeniable radicality to Heather and Nikki's unrepentant occupation of space on the stage. The bold sexuality of their performances refutes any construction of women's sexuality as passive. The physicality and embodied erotic experience of dance can itself be a site of women's resistance. Gotfrit, citing Martin, argues "the body is not as colonized as the mind, which is no longer capable of truly critical consciousness precisely because the mind is the locus of the social control rendered in Western societies through consent and not coercion" (1989, 10). Bodies on stage have the potential to enact forms of resistance that otherwise may have been closed off to women and men. Audre Lourde asserts, "in touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness" (1984, 58). Powerlessness is something neither Nikki nor Heather even remotely connected with their performances. Both claimed a sense of power to be central to their experiences. Their (re)appropriation of erotic expression, outside any intent to substantially profit financially, is in itself a form of trouble. Certainly, they are paid for their performances but both Nikki and Heather had other, more primary sources of income. On the other hand, even erotic expression for profit, such as the work of Annie Sprinkle, still has subversive potential. The fact that Nikki and Heather do not rely on their audiences for a sustainable income shifted the focus of their performances away from pleasing the audiences and toward pleasing themselves. Both specifically referred to their performances as therapeutic, a way to express and get out a variety of emotions.

At the same time, however, Heather and Nikki's performances also have much in common with the few popular icons that have been taken up as feminist heroes, such as

Madonna. The strongest similarities here are the central themes of malleable identity and boundary crossing.

I am aware of the valid analyses that problematize Madonna's appropriation of minority culture and her ability to do so based on her firm positioning as a white, ultimately heterosexual woman of elite status. Regardless, I believe that alongside these (re)inscriptions of inequality and domination, there is a concomitant subversive potential in her work. McCleary skillfully shows that

> Madonna's art itself repeatedly deconstructs the traditional notion of the unified subject with finite ego boundaries. Her pieces explore–sometimes playfully, sometimes seriously–various ways of constituting identities that refuse stability, that remain fluid, that resist definition (1991, 150).

It is this fluidity, in her constant shape shifting and play with subject positions, that I would like to take up here. Madonna has been read as a particularly potent feminist figure precisely because she, throughout much of her career, has not been under masculine control. Her erotic expressions always seemed to be about pleasing men, women and, more importantly, herself. In her allusions to iconic figures such as Carmen, "she invokes the body and feminine sexuality; but unlike them, she refuses to be framed by a structure that will push her back into submission or annihilation" (McCleary 1991, 152).

Nikki and Heather feel they were in complete control of every productive aspect of their performances[5]. The Shocore performance only occurred because members of the band had seen 'All You Can Eat' and approached Heather and Nikki to work with them. Nikki recalled,

> when we first started dong this Heather and I talked and we were like you know, 'if at any minute we feel like we're you know, um like a, we don't feel comfortable with this or we feel like we're getting taken advantage of that's it'. (If) it's not gonna be fun anymore, what's the point of doing it right? (Transcript Two, lines 116-19).

She added,

> all the record label people and stuff, they just don't know what to do with us cause we're two girls and we're really strong girls with opinions and we're like, hey, they'd say it's this way and we'd say no, it's not gonna work out and if you want us then this is the way its gonna be and as soon as you have an opinion things change. All of a sudden you're a bitch or you know 'she's mean' (lines 123-27).

This personal control and autonomy is impressive in a context that has traditionally excluded and negated feminine intervention. Heather reinforced this idea saying, "we are always in...control and have the final say of what we want to do" (Transcript One, lines 110-12) in both the Shocore and 'All You Can Eat' contexts.

In their control over their performances and (re)presentations, Heather and Nikki are also similar to Madonna in her attempts to disrupt the naturalized object-subject dichotomous positions. McCleary's analysis of Madonna's 'Open Your Heart' video clearly illustrates this disruption.

> The peep show situation is shot in such a way that the leering patrons are rendered pathetic and grotesque, while she alone lays claim to subjectivity: thus the usual power relation between the voyeuristic

[5] Note, again, that this 'complete control', from a poststructuralist perspective, is only experienced as such.

male gaze and object is here destabilized. (1991, 162)

Heather and Nikki may be open to the fetishistic, consumptive gaze but, because they are in control of their performances and because they thoroughly enjoy them, they are (re)positioned not simply as 'active' subjects, but through a complexity of a range of subject and object positions.

There is also radical potential in Nikki and Heather's displays of hyper-femininity alone. Their costumes consist of a variety of highly stereotypical female adornments, including tutus, Playboy Bunny t-shirts, 'Catholic school girl outfits' and boas. The intended humor of these costumes seemed clear the first time I saw the Shocore performance, particularly because they used such a vast array. Had they only used one or two, it would have been questionable whether they were trying to be parodic or simply stereotypically suggestive. As Mary Russo suggests, "[to] put on femininity with a vengeance suggests the power to take it off" (in Reynolds and Press 1995, 316). The constantly changing costumes revealed the ever-shifting and nonessentialist experience of gender. Heather and Nikki were putting on a hyperbolic gender, but they also revealed that this 'putting on' was a reversible endeavor. Their costume usage resembles camp aesthetic and drag, which "have always reveled the fictive nature of gender, the fact that femininity is located not in the essence of the person but in accoutrements: make-up, wigs, high-heels, glamorous clothes" (Reynolds and Press 1995, 318), or any gendered adornments or acts.

Sex, as the title of Madonna's book illustrates, has always been a crucial aspect of her public persona. For many of us, Madonna is sex. Whether this is understood as positive or not, there is no denying the subversive potential of women's public (re)appropriation of a sexuality that has always been constructed as passive, objectified and at the service of male desire. The most salient part of both the Shocore and 'All You Can Eat' shows are Heather and Nikki's sexual expression. Nikki asserts:

> I mean most of our show is sexual. You know what I mean? I think that is probably one of the biggest elements and I think they're (the audience) totally drawn to that. Everyone's a sexual creature. Everyone likes to watch sex or see it or little innuendos and stuff like that you know, so I do think its like a big draw for sure. (Transcript Two, lines 775-78)

However, their sexual expression certainly is not confined to being passive objects for the male voyeur. For Nikki, sexploitation was a central aspect of the show. She says:

> We do a lot of sexploitation. (line 311) Exploiting it. You know what I mean, ummm. Throwing it in people's faces…girls are supposed to be a certain way you know and so its fun to get on stage and be totally opposite (lines 325-331). I mean Heather and I are token tarts you know what I mean, like we make fools of ourselves. We don't go up there trying to be sexy, you know (lines 312-14).

This complex, contradictory, and, most importantly, playful usage of sex has been criticized by many feminist academics (Manners 1999). It is wise to approach male-dominated public sexual displays with caution. However, Manners makes a insightful analysis of much feminist rejection of such sexual play and display as 'all that stupid sex stuff': "one might begin to suspect that it is sometimes female sexuality *itself*–particularly when unmoored from reproductive issues and 'lost' in realms of pleasure or desire or performativity–which is read as fluff, superficial... which is in and of itself considered to

be 'silly' or 'stupid,' 'a whole lot of stylish fluff'"(1999, 31 emphasis in original). While caution may be a reasonable approach, feminist negation of such public interventions threatens to close down conversations about a female sexuality that is not passive, is not objectified and is not orientated only to men's gratification.

It was exciting and invigorating to see women's sexuality (re)presented as aggressive and self-pleasuring in Heather and Nikki's performances. Two particular sections of the 'All You Can Eat Show' performance art piece come to mind. In the first one Nikki and two men[6] perform to the song, "I Need a Man." While her attentions are directed towards these two men at the beginning of the song, it quickly became obvious that all is not as it appears. Slowly, her attentions turned from being outwardly focused on the men to being turned inwards in autoerotic display. Undoubtedly, this contradicts much conventional discourse that problematizes and even medicalizes both women's 'failure' to focus their erotic attentions towards men and their turning of that same energy inwards. However, Nikki's preliminary attention to the men is absolutely necessary as another level of disruption going on here, as well. As Nikki's erotic attention is turned inwards, the male performances begin to question whether the men on stage really are this thing that Nikki supposedly *needs*. In fact, their attention turns towards each other and they simulate sex. This did not appear to be a result of Nikki's turn inward, but rather a concomitant habitual and fluid occurrence. These performances undermined both the conventional presumptions of opposite sex orientation and how they work to define men and women in oppositionally hierarchical relationships. Further, these performances were subversive because they encourage the viewer to ask what is going on at different parts of the song/performance. Are Nikki and the men only 'passing for straight' in the beginning? (Bell and Binnie 1994, 36) What parts of their performances are 'natural' and what part 'contrived'? Most importantly, their performances bring into questions the straightness of straight.

The bisexuality[7] evident throughout both the Shocore performance and 'All You Can Eat', whether that of Heather, Nikki or the men, itself undermined conventional gender and sexual prescriptions. As Eadie argues, "the work of bisexual politics is at least as much about dismantling the entire apparatus which maintains the heterosexual/homosexual dyad as it is about creating a third term to add to it" (1993, 142). Ultimately, bisexual public (dis)play, as a discouraged but at least intelligible sexual orientation, "disarticulates comfortable identity-positions" (1993, 149) and as such constitutes a potent site of resistance to heterosexism. Although this is an interesting and notable aspect of their performances, I would like to focus more on other parts of their performances that enact a Butler-type politic of disruption.

A second example of such sexual (mis)performances in the 'All You Can Eat' show was another number that Heather did with two males. In this portion, she was

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[6] While Heather and Nikki have final say over all aspects of their productions, I think that it is positive that they include males in 'All You Can Eat', thus illustrating the potential for united efforts to destabilize oppressive gender and sexual regimes. The men's sexual orientations were understandably never discussed during the interviews so I cannot comment on how this may or may not have affected or contributed to their participation.

[7] I acknowledge here that the dichotomous heterosexual matrix is limiting me, but I do this with specific intention. As will be discussed at length later, following Butler, I must acknowledge that our entire imaginations are limited by the modernist conventions that have constituted us all as particular sexual subjects.

enjoying an erotic exchange with the men. The two men exposed fake plastic snakes, which act as faux penises. At first, Heather seemed receptive to their attentions and desires but shortly thereafter there was a shift where she became the sexual aggressor and even symbolically castrated the men by biting and ripping the snakes out of their pants. It remains unclear exactly why she did this, although it could be because she had not actually desired their sexual attention and thus was avenging a sexual assault. Regardless, the directness and boldness of her actions were disruptive of our conventional societal understanding of sexuality, sexual assault, and 'natural' feminine sexuality. Heather and Nikki's varied usage of sexuality, particularly in their denaturalizing of women's sexuality as passive and receptive, are Butleresque troublings of gender. They are also powerful examples of what Mann calls micro-politics, which she defines as an endeavor that

> seeks a redistribution of the dimensions of sexual agency such that women will have as much right to feel, express, and act upon their sexual desires as men have. Men will be obliged to be as concerned with women's sexual desires, positive or negative, as women are with the desires of men. The patriarchal asymmetries that now define heterosexual relationships will be replaced by more symmetrical forms of sexual agency (1994, 27).

While this definition is clearly limited by its exclusive attention to heterosexuality, endeavors to breakdown conventional sexual and gendered norms, such as those seen in Nikki and Heather's performances, are productive. Further, a failure to explore the potential for subversion in both normative and nonnormative sexual orientations is restrictive and contrary to Butler's basic assumptions about where and how gender trouble can occur.

Certainly, women's public usage of sexual expression, whether Madonna or Heather and Nikki, is an approach held with suspicion by some feminists, such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon. Is sexual display the only recourse to public display that women have? Are such displays suspect, as women have throughout history been constructed as spectacle for men's pleasure? Is this sexual expression a role that female performers choose, or are they forced into it by coercive conventions of acceptable feminine public display? These are important questions, but Nikki and Heather's performances are particularly subversive precisely because they are not exclusively determined by conventional constructions of gender. The high degree of sexual expression in their performances does not mean that they are falsely conscious dupes of male appropriation. Rather, Heather and Nikki's performances show that, while sexuality may be something that everyone experiences as 'natural', our beliefs about it and what can be expected from it are culturally mediated affairs open to (re)constitution and (re)articulation.

The Shocore and 'All You Can Eat' performances, through incongruency and humor, further destablize and undermine coercive gender and sexual norms. In these ways Nikki and Heather's performances are similar to those of Courtney Love, Riot Grrrl and the Guerrilla Girls. The public success of Love and Riot Grrrl has been an integral to what many feminists define as third wave feminism. In its attention to second wave critiques from lesbians and women of color, third wave feminism signals a more complex and fluid engagement with dominant discourses surrounding sex and gender. Heywood and Drake argue:

> One public figure who demonstrates some of the contradictions that third wave feminism brings together is Courtney Love, the punk rock musician who bridges the opposition between 'power feminism' and 'victim feminism'. She combines the individualism, combativeness, and starpower...with second wave critiques of beauty and male dominance. (1997, 4)

I see Nikki and Heather as engaging in a similar endeavor. Their performances acknowledge the conventional gender and sexual restrictions that have beleaguered women, but they do not determine these performances. In this particular (re)formulation of feminist intervention, ugliness and incongruence in performance is critical.

Eileraas defines ugliness "as an intentional deviation from 'nice, gentle, pretty' ways of looking, talking, behaving and visualizing", which can be deployed "as a resistant practice that challenges cultural representations of 'pretty' femininity" (1997, 122). Furthermore, I would argue that ugliness in women's public (re)presentations undermines the idea that there is something inherent or essential in women that makes them pretty and desire 'prettiness'. Both Heather and Nikki emphasized that their performances were not 'pretty', and certainly not specifically geared towards turning men on. Heather specifies:

> I think in that sense we're not going for an ultra feminine thing or we wouldn't be spitting, we wouldn't be {sticks tongue out}, we'd be trying to suit the cliché of what people think of as female, of just dancing around, you know shaking our bums, and you know and like and just trying to look super pretty. We weren't. I mean by the end of the show we looked gross, our makeup was everywhere, we were soaking wet, like totally sweaty and snot on our faces (Transcript One, lines 611-17)

Nikki also specified that what they are doing on stage is not about being attractive to their male audience. She says:

> some guys just aren't turned on, you know, turned by girls that do what we do, you know what I mean?...Being strong women up there. Not afraid to show their sexuality. Not afraid to take their tops off and laugh and laugh with them and laugh at themselves and you know what I mean like some men just like I think more meeker women. You know polite, respectful...but boring. (Transcript Two, lines 614-20).

Regardless of whether or not their performances are attractive to men, Heather and Nikki were focused on expressing their sexuality and themselves. Their performances, which are fundamentally incongruent with conventional expectations of 'super pretty,' 'polite,' and 'respectful' femininity, are disruptive and exciting.

Similar to Courtney Love's band, Hole, Nikki and Heather use props of conventional, pretty femininity. However, their reference "to 'essential' female prettiness is everywhere subverted by coexisting ugly imagery such as running" makeup (Eileraas 1997, 123). There is something powerfully subversive about the incongruency of the sweaty, aggressive, makeup-dripping woman in feminine clothes. In their refusal to embody a neatly 'tousled but still alluring' look they move beyond heterosexist images of sweaty passionate (hetero)sex.

With regards to Riot Grrrl, Eileraas claims, "[the] persistent scream/howl/wail/

moan/shriek of girl-band music signals an aggressive, antidecorum presence, [which is] politically significant in a culture that has historically socialized women to doubt the authority of their voices and then soften or silence them altogether" (1997, 123). While they may not use their voices to do this, Heather and Nikki make the same type of powerful resistive statement with their bodies. If women's voices have traditionally been silenced, then so too have their bodies been bound, covered, manipulated, negated and shamed. While women have conventionally been silenced, Riot Grrrl bands shout, and while women's sexuality has traditionally been constructed as powerless and out of control, Nikki and Heather experience their performances as fundamentally powerful and completely within their control.

> In regards to Courtney Love's concerts, Eileraas says:
> Perhaps an apt metaphor for this kind of performance is that of an endless striptease, one that continues after all clothes have been removed. This kind of 'stripping' goes beyond the 'tease' to reveal the scars just under the skin's surface. The metaphor of the endless strip uncovers a fine line between 'sexy' and 'repulsive' undressing: what is sexy is the piecemeal exhibition of glossy, available (yet always only tentatively) surface or flesh; repulsive is its emotional, flawed, rough-hewn underpinning. (1997, 129)

Such expressions of pain and negation are certainly understandable and powerful but a visible sexuality that is not reacting to mistreatment and erasure seems to speak more productively. While we never delved very deeply into Heather and Nikki's personal lives, the pain of silenced negation was not evident in their performances. Expressive joy, fun and playfulness characterized their performances. They perform a positive sexuality that does not need to be scarred and screaming in agony to speak powerfully.

In their protest postering of New York, the Guerrilla Girls art collective's principal strategy of political action was 'perspective by incongruity' (Demo 2000). For Demo, this strategy signals 'a comic politics of subversion'; she argues "planned incongruity not only pokes fun at the failures of the social structure but also offers a comic corrective to such failings" (2000, 134). While the specific feminist political intentions of the Guerrilla Girls have been widely acknowledged, the relationship between Heather and Nikki's performances and their intentions are more complex and characterized by contradiction. Regardless, Demo's analysis of the Guerrilla Girls is useful in reading these performances. In addition, it is useful to link Heather and Nikki with other public female performers, including the Guerrilla Girls, Madonna, Courtney Love and Riot Grrrl, as a means of seeing general patterns of resistance.

Demo relies on Kenneth Burke's notion of "perspective by incongruity" in her analysis of Guerrilla Girl political interventions, arguing that incongruity has the "effect of shattering 'pieties'", our conventional frames of meaning and perspective (2000, 139). Heather and Nikki's performances show the incongruity between what is expected of women and what is possible, the incongruity between expectation and reality. They show how the discursive nature of our conventional gender productions is too incomplete, exclusive and inflexible to account for their experiences and (re)presentation of being female. While women in our society may *ideally* be pretty, quiet, demure and sexually receptive, Nikki and Heather put on public (re)presentations that are sometimes ugly, loud, assertive and sexually aggressive. Their juxtaposition of stereotypically feminine

behaviors and masculine behaviors is a powerful revelatory tool. The shattering of 'pieties' or conventions relies on the "appropriation and ironic repositioning of conventional patriarchal symbolic codes" (Demo 2000, 140). This is closely linked with Butler's notion of picking up the master's tools (1999). This is a particularly potent political endeavor as it does not, in its early stages, necessitate the entire shattering and destruction of the 'master's' world, but rather (re)works it, renovating the established order from the inside with the ultimate intention of rebuilding new conceptual frameworks. "By casting the failure to live up to communal ideals (of equality) in a comic light, the Guerrilla Girls are able to restructure the master's house without leveling it first" (Demo 2000, 153).

Comedy is central to both Heather and Nikki's understanding of their performances. Heather says:

> we have this things called the 'Wet T-Shirt Contest' but its totally a spoof on, um, I consider it making fun of sort of girl clichés, like Nikki comes on and she's dancing around, she's contestant number one, like she's a stripper or whatever, but it's really funny and I come out and I'm just really drunk and I pass out and get wet anyway and it's just really funny and I think it's, me personally, I consider it making fun of so many different…clichés and people in the world. (Transcript One, lines 219-26)

It is not clear whether they are mocking those that think these are accurate stereotypes of women or whether they are mocking women that perpetuate these stereotypes. I watched some footage of the same number and noticed that Nikki had 'Sloppy Cunt' written on her stomach and Heather had 'Drunk Whore' written on hers. I immediately thought of instances when I had seen pictures of Courtney Love and Riot Grrrl do the same thing, so I asked Nikki to clarify the number and what it meant to her. In her understanding, there is again a high degree of gender and sexual play. At the end of the 'Wet T-shirt contest', their 'androgynous little boy' dancer wins. Nikki clarifies, saying:

> then the winner is [male name], this guy here [points to a picture on the table], our androgynous little boy. And he comes out [in] Carrie's blood, stuff…[It's] funny like [for] a lot of people those names stick out. And like I know a lot of people like tease me and call me that all the time and stuff like that but it was funny. I wouldn't peg myself with it if I didn't think I was gonna get teased. (Transcript Two, lines 460-70).

When I ask her if this was a political act of (re)appropriation, Nikki replies:

> Nuhu, we were just like, like I said, sitting around having some wine and we're like we have to think of [characters] and Heather's like 'I'm gonna be Drunk Whore', and I'm like 'I'm gonna be Sloppy Cunt, and that's as far as it was…And we think it's funny And that's why we do it. Has no other reason behind it. (lines 485-487)

Even the Riot Grrrl explanation of similar behavior, while politically intentional, has an element of humor. Bikini Kill singer Kathleen Hanna explains the tactic, "when you take off your shirt [onstage] the guys think, 'Oh, what a slut' and it's really funny because they think that and then they look at you and it says it" (in Reynolds and Press 1995, 325). Interestingly, neither performer specifically mirrors the (re)appropriative meanings

academics have constructed around these acts, which hold that "if the subject who is named in derogation refuses that identification and returns the name to its initial speaker in a transmogrified form, the illocutionary and interpellative force of the original performative is destabilized" (Mills 2000, 268). Rather, they have a unique theatrical perspective, which appreciates such action simply for its comedic value. But there is, nonetheless, the powerful statement made that these women will not be caged and disciplined by injurious terms. When recalling the few negative reactions they have received from audience members, Nikki claimed, "it was just like [being] called, sluts, you know, or strippers, whores, that kind of stuff but whoever's saying that is just silly. I don't listen to it anyways. I don't buy into that" (Transcript Two, lines 422-24). She does guess that it does bother Heather, although not enough to limit her self-expression and (re)presentation. Both theatrical and academic perspectives are useful since subversive actions are meaningful and interesting on different levels and in different ways.

Nikki explained that comedy came from making fun of both themselves and the audience. She states, "we're like hams, we don't try to make ourselves look good, you know what I mean, if anything we make fun of ourselves" (Transcript Two, lines 826-27). Although this self-parody was important, Nikki sees the 'tricks' played on and the incongruity presented to the audience as being an aspect central to the shows appeal. On their appeal in different venues she argues

> a straight club that expects to see a band and all, suddenly a group of fuckin' banshee girls shows up on stage and starts squirting water and throwing fish at them you know. It's like 'What?'...In a gay club, they're expecting a drag queen to come out and lip sync Whitney Houston and you get two girls on stage making a birthday cake and flour is everywhere...So it's like in each instance its I think a shock to them, not expecting to see it. You know?...[And] I think that's one of our greatest elements of our show is that, I mean, it's kind of a sabotage on the audience, a little bit. I think we pick on them a little bit. (lines 546-54)

Their performances teasingly chide the viewer into examining the stereotypes they portray in some instances and deconstruct in other ones. As Flinn asserts, "comedy is often generated from a sense of the 'incoherence' of a performer's body...the disunified body, the funny body that doesn't quite fit with itself" (1995, 69). There is a productive disunity in the (re)presentations of the discrepancies between the expectations and the realities of women's bodies and in their juxtaposition of stereotypically feminine and masculine performances. The comedic way Heather and Nikki's performances try to push the audience's boundaries of acceptable gender and sexual behavior through 'shocking' displays makes their work particularly amenable to positive reception, which makes it more effective at boundary deconstruction.

One problem in Butler's early theoretical works, such as *Gender Trouble*, is her inability to account for the interaction that occurs between performative 'readers' and 'presenters'. Rothenberg and Valente argue that she "predicates her politics entirely on an assumption of a substantial correspondence between the aim of the performer...and the reception of the audience, a universal 'we' prepared to see 'sex and gender denaturalized by means of [the] performance" (1997, 300). I would not go so far as to argue that her conceptualization of reception is this insubstantial, however, while she has tried to

address this issue in later works such as *Bodies That Matter* and *The Psychic Life Of Power*, she ultimately has little to say about how these subversive (re)iterations will be read. Although Butler "does not make the theoretically obvious point that [the assumption of correspondence] requires absolute conformity of viewpoint between performer and audience in order for *predictable* performative effects to transpire" (Rothenberg and Valente 1997, 301 emphasis added), I would argue that this is not an inherent weakness in her work. It is not that issues of reception are straightforward or predictable, but rather that their very *unpredictability* is potentially subversive. Both Nikki and Heather definitely felt that their performances are received positively.

> I think at first when we started four years ago, it was like, they called us kids and, you know, they didn't take us seriously. But now I mean, we get the greatest reception now, and it's exciting, it's like 'about time!' you know like, it just goes to show like, you know that old saying, like if you believe in something and you work hard something's gonna happen and it seems like, Heather and I were saying the other day, it seems like nowadays like we don't have to book shows they come to us. (Nikki, Transcript Two, lines 385-90)

Interestingly, both felt that female audience members, after initially being suspicious, were particularly receptive to their shows. Indeed, women have become their 'number one fans.' Nikki recalls, "[girls] were like 'wow that's so great that you could get up there and do that in a man's world. You know, you two are up there, you know, rulin' it'" (lines 78-80) and times when women would come to them after the show and say "'you give me such hope'" (line 281). This generally positive reception suggests women see 'something' subversive and radical. There is an exciting element in the public act that at first seems suspicious and (re)iterative of misogynist dominant discourse, but reveals itself to be so much more. This cross over was evident when women would say to them, "'you know at first I was like, oh my god, but you guys kick ass'" (lines 746-47). For Nikki, the identification the female audience members have with her and Heather is self-evident and expected. She asserts, "what girl doesn't want that in a totally male dominated world. You know, music, industry. To be able to get up there and control all these guys standing [out] there...It's like, what girl wouldn't want to have that power?" (lines 91-93). Further, Nikki felt that women identify with them as 'real', complex contradictory and imperfectly performed women, saying:

> I think that's what a lot of girls did like to see was that we were real women up there, you know, and not afraid to show our bodies and not starving ourselves and trying to be something else. It's that we were just raw. We're just two girls up there...Not trying to be anything but just having fun. (lines 515-18)

Here I see another radical aspect of their performances. Not only do these stage productions give Heather and Nikki a sense of power and self-control, they also speak powerfully to their female audience members, who in their everyday lives fail *uncomically* to perform their 'womanliness' properly. As an alternative press article on 'All You Can Eat' reports, "female audience members are telling them what 'strong women' they are, that they are living proof women can be sexy and strong at the same time" (Nolan in *The Nerve*, 2001, 11). Their performances empower them and their audience. While women have conventionally been confined to the deviant sexualized

body, these associations do not limit Nikki and Heather. Rather than try to deny their sexuality in its malleability and fluidity, they expose the fundamentally 'unnatural' constructions that have caged and negated women's sexuality as passive and victimized.

Nikki recounted to me one instance where a male fan had reacted negatively. After a show he had come up to her and purposefully spit rye into her face. Given that she did not know the man, it seems reasonable to believe that he was reacting to the content of the show. The reaction of female fans, my own attraction to their work and such instances of backlash and rejection, strongly suggests there is a visibly 'feminist' aspect of the show. Popular alternative media treatments of Heather and Nikki's performances also (re)present the work as radical and subversive. Elizabeth Nolan wrote, "they just live to explode sexual boundaries and simultaneously get the audience off" (2001, 11). While my own readings may be more theoretically driven, there is a congruity of perspective that is notable.

As Heather articulated, "I think the majority likes what we do but even if they don't, I don't mind, I mean, at least you're doing something that people are talking about" (Transcript One, lines 1342-44). I agree with Heather completely and see their performances as part of a larger visible shift in the discourse usage and (re)presentation of female performers, started in the 1990s, although seen in the gender bending of some music artists of the 1980s (Frith 1990, 420). While such trespasses are still generally unacceptable, there is a large enough section of society, in both the so-called queer and nonqueer circles, and in the more accurate overlaps in between, that supports gender trouble and facilitates its visibility as a political strategy. While coverage has been both positive and negative, confirming and negating, there is still the attendant and unpredictably productive discussion. Indeed, there was mainstream national media attention to Riot Grrrl in *Cosmopolitan*. As Manners argues, "for all the flap at the time over Madonna's 'overexposure,' or Roseanne's parodic 'blasphemy,' or for that matter Courtney Love's supposedly poisoned womb (and mouth and mind), *Sex* sold out, *Rosanne's* ratings remained at the top, and Hole signed a bigger contract than Nirvana's" (1999, 28). The material success of these female icons speaks to the potential success of a politics based on Butler's notions of (re)iterative and disruptive performativity. Manners characterizes this popular feminist discourse as being "aware of itself as both transgressive and yet always caught up in other, less 'liberating' networks" (1999, 28). While these contradictions must be acknowledged, the general subversive potential of such public 'antics' must not be undervalued.

Ambivalent Performances

Constraint and enablement, exclusion and production are two sides of the same coin
Veronica Vasterling 1999, 31

Butler's conception of agency has come under much critical fire over the years. She seems to draw such critical fire specifically because her work completely undermines the notions of agency and subjectivity that have been in use throughout the modern period. As Barvosa-Carter succinctly outlines:

> If agency is understood as a human being's capacity to conceive and execute his/her own actions and projects, then agency has historically been assumed to depend on one of two conditions of the self. On one condition drawn from the Kantian tradition, the self is potentially independent of the social world and its influence, and is thus capable of being the sole author of its own actions. Under the second condition, humans are deeply imbedded or 'situated' in social life, and while discursive orders condition the subject and its action, there remains a prediscursive aspect of the self (however small) from which agency springs (2001, 125).

It has often been assumed that in order for agency to be present and effective, and structural determinism avoided, the will of the individual must somehow be held interior to the person and escape the reaches of discursive power (Stern 2000, 110). The idea that agency escapes discursive constitution has offered hope for many theorists, as no matter how predetermined a situation seems to be there is always the chance that this form of agency will be exerted. Butler's work completely turns its back on this prediscursive agency. She explicitly argues again and again that there is indeed no doer behind our performative acts. As was explored earlier, it was due to my own positioning in thoroughly modernist feminist subjectivities that I began this thesis looking for an agency that had escaped discursive misogynist determinism. Interestingly, I still did not believe that I was working on a project that was antithetical to Butler's work; it is simply that prior to speaking with Heather and Nikki, I could not fully comprehend what Butler was arguing.

For theorists that are open to exploring new sites of agency Butler's conceptualization of agency still garners other critiques. Nelson, like many other feminist and sociological scholars, argues, "performativity ontologically assumes an abstracted subject (i.e. abstracted as a subject position in a given discourse) and thus provides no space for conscious reflexivity, negotiation or agency in the doing of identity" (1999, 332). On the terms of such critique, Butler's work, in its dissolution of the prediscursive subject, preempts any possibility of intentionality, accountability and autonomy. Indeed, Nelson argues that even when Butler herself has approached instances of political intervention and potential change, particularly in *Gender Trouble*, such "displacement of dominant discourse remains accidental and unintentional" and such "that new discursive possibilities stem from chance convergences that operate if not completely outside the 'subject', then at least autonomously from it" (1999, 337). I will explore this further but I would argue that what I found in Nikki and Heather's political interventions was more

ambivalence than accident. While Nelson and others may not believe that modernist conceptions of agency are fully adequate, they argue that Butler's turn to absolute discursive constitution must necessarily result in absolute determination, despite Butler's attempts to dispel this deterministic assumption and the supposed attendant breakdown in feminist politics. These critiques are under-theorized but have been invaluably productive in spurring clarification and reworking of the notion of agency in both Butler and her supporters.

At its most basic level, what Butler's work does is "*theorize both the transgressivity and the normativity of performativity*" (McKenzie 1998, 221 emphasis in original). Hers is a theory of both subversion and normative (re)iteration. In this sense, there is an inherent ambivalence in Butler's work and in various poststructural subjectivities, as is evidenced by the ambivalence I found in Heather and Nikki's performances and verbalized intentions. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler clarifies that the "iterability of performativity is a theory of agency, one that cannot disavow power as a condition of its own possibility" (1999, xxiv). Butler still advances the possibility of political intervention and change, but she does it in a way that denies many modernist assumptions. Agency, rather than being situated outside of discursive power, never escapes this power; indeed, it is actually only made possible through power. Clarifying her earlier writing on agency, Butler writes:

> The agency denoted by the performativity of 'sex' will be directly counter to any notion of a voluntaristic subject who exists quite apart from the regulatory norms which she/he opposes. The paradox of subjectivation (*assujetissement*) is precisely that the subject who would resist such norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms. Although this constitutive constraint does not foreclose the possibility of agency, it does locate agency as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power. (1993, 15).

She goes on to specify that such a conceptualization of agency and performativity demands that we not theorize gender and sexual (mis)performatives as being outside the coercive regulatory sexual regimes. In addition, any *account of agency* resulting from such subjectivation should not be confused with the individualistic, choosing subject (1993, 15).

I must take a moment here to discuss Butler's usage of the phrase 'account of agency'. This is a specific usage that signals the poststructural desire to reveal the notion of agentic choice and action as absolutely illusory. However, it seems a weakness of Butler's work that she does not make these clarifications, which would alleviate many misreadings. Regrettably, throughout her work, Butler uses the word *agency* as though it has some inherent meaning and character, mistakenly inserting a sense of intentionality into her discussions (Nelson 1999, 338). This illusory sense pervades many of the citations of Butler I use here.

Bronwyn Davies cogently sums up poststructural agency:

> [choices] are understood as more akin to 'forced choices,' since the subject's positioning within particular discourses makes the 'chosen' line of action the only possible action, not because there are no other lines of action but because one has been subjectively

> constituted through one's placement within that discourse to *want* that line of action. By making clear the way in which a person is subjected by discourse, poststructuralist theory shows how agency is fundamentally illusory (2000, 60).

> [Thus] the subject as it is understood by poststructuralism...can only engage in *apparent* acts of choosing or positioning, or of experiencing the self as agentic. (2000, 133)

Through recourse to humanist discourse we (mis)take ourselves to be 'choosing' and 'positioning'. This is not, however, a slip into nihilist political fatalism, as many have argued. To see oneself as an agentic subject is still *a* form of poststructural subjectivity and is still to speak powerfully, but theorists such as Davies and Butler only seek to illustrate how this agentic self is immanent to power and discursive production.

For Butler, "[there] is no subject prior to its constructions, and neither is the subject determined by those constructions" thus our account of agency always occurs in "the nexus, the non-space of cultural collision, in which the demand to resignify or repeat the very terms which constitute the 'we' cannot be summarily refused, but neither can they be followed in strict obedience" (1993, 124). This notion of simultaneous normativity and subversion only became understandable to me after speaking with Heather and Nikki and discovering a great deal of ambivalence. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, where Butler most thoroughly elaborates the notion of subjectivation and its attendant contradictions and complexities, she says, "[the] subject is itself a site of this ambivalence in which the subject merges both as the *effect* of a prior power and as the *condition of possibility* for a radically conditioned form of agency" (1997, 14-15 emphasis in original). Power, for Butler, is most definitely not always only deterministic, as many had fallaciously argued. Indeed, she goes on to specify, "[what] is enacted by the subject is enabled but not finally constrained by the prior working of power. Agency exceeds the power by which it is enabled" (1997, 15). The potential for change lies in (re)interpreting and subversively (re)working dominant sexual discourses. This as a fundamental strength of Butler's theoretical work because it acknowledges our immanence to relations of power and domination, while still offering the possibility of (re)structuring such relations. This ultimately provides us the opportunity to account for the contradictions and complexities of both our own senses of personhood and the social world. Her writing "[qualifies] and [delimits] the pure freedom of subjects to act against the structures of authority, so as to place agency between acknowledgment of the profundity of the discursive constitution of subjects and the inherent fragility of every discursive order" (Jenkins 2001, 366). This conceptual vigor is related to the general poststructural refusal to delineate coherent unified narratives, which arguably facilitates its negotiation of the contradictions that are inherent to the subjectivity that has been falsely constructed as unified and coherent.

Butler's reliance on Foucault's conceptualization of subjectivation or *assujetissement* is central to her work on performativity, and therefore to understanding the ambivalence that I saw in Nikki and Heather. For Butler, any political intervention, whether it is constructed by the actor as being intentional or not, is not "entered into deliberately or voluntarily but rather is a process which subjects are compelled to enter into insofar as they are constituted in and through relations of power in society" (Webster

2000, 11). We are compelled to act in particular ways by a variety of dominant discourses. However, dominant discourses cannot be conceptualized as coherent and monolithic, but rather should be acknowledged as vastly diverse and inclusive of discourses that counter and question hegemonies of inequality. While we have some options, our political and personal endeavors are *always* caught up in and have relied on these inequitable dominant discourses, and thus, when analyzing social action and meaning, we must account for both normative and transgressive tendencies. Even in cases where dominant discourses are being reworked and destabilized, as in Heather and Nikki's performances, we must acknowledge that such political 'agents' "[inhabit] the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection that implies radical dependency" (Butler 2000, 336). Thus any site of resistance in always an effect of subjectivation, and therefore integral to power in its self-subversion. In a 1998 interview, Butler clarifies: "I see opposition working *from within* the very terms by which power is reelaborated" (279 emphasis in original).

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler analyses the film, Paris is Burning, to explore one (re)presentation of drag as resistance.

> The film *Paris is Burning* has been interesting to read less for the ways in which it deploys denaturalizing strategies to reidealize whiteness and heterosexual gender norms than for the less stabilizing rearticulations of kinship it occasions. (1993, 240)

While drag may have the *potential* to undermine and destabilize dominant constructions of gender and sexuality, Butler finds that the denaturalizing drag performances in the film actually reidealize and reinforce exclusive, violent norms. There was, however, an aspect of the performances that Butler found to be transgressive. This was in their organization through drag 'houses'–close groups that act as surrogate families to the drag ball participants– and 'less stabilizing rearticulations of kinship'. Their (re)figuring of the family takes up dominant norms of acceptable familial relations, such as support, shared resources and encouragement, while at the same time (re)working and (re)articulating them in the houses. There is both the normative reliance on dominant constructions of kinship relations, based on marriage and blood, and the subversive uptake of these notions by the drag participants, in expanded imaginings of what constitutes a family. Regardless of how the predominantly lower class, Black and Latino drag lives and experiences are negated and excluded by the conventional idealization of white, upper and middle class heterosexuality, they cannot escape these discourses. Rather, both implicate themselves in the reidealization of such violent discourses and subversively (re)work and (re)articulated these discourses in novel and radical configurations. Butler concludes:

> Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a 'pure' opposition, a 'transcendence' of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitable impure. (1993, 241)

In Heather and Nikki's performances I found similar complexity and contradiction. While above I constructed them as being subversively radical in their

(re)articulations of gender and sexual norms, just below this surface reading is a wealth of inconsistency. Still, I do not believe that these contradictions strip them of meaning and radical potential; indeed it is their immanence to power that makes these reworkings so powerful. Further, acknowledging inconsistency and complexity provides us with a more accurate view of the social world and the potential for change.

While this simultaneously normative and transgressive ambivalence is evident throughout their performances, one particular portion of 'All You Can Eat' is illustrative. In it, Nikki does not appear, but Heather performs with another woman and man to the song 'Barbie Girl,' by Aqua. Interestingly, the song is *already* a parodic comment on how women are seen as poseable, pleasure-giving dolls. Heather and the other woman use 'dollish' costumes and robotic movements to signal their equivalence with the figurative Barbie. Much of the performance is a visual representation of the lyrics, which are thoroughly entrenched in dominant discourses that construct women as objectified, non-humans whose purpose is male pleasure. At the same time, their various (re)presentations of the lyrics are hyperbolic and parodic. With their bodies and facial expressions they signal the ridiculousness of these stereotypes. Regardless, the very fact that women are being posed and used for sexual pleasure reiterates the construction of women as such, and there is the possibility that the audience will not recognize the humor of their self-mocking parody. While I definitely think that people generally see that there is something interesting and unusual about their performances, there is a concomitant recognition of the 'natural' roles that women and men have 'always' played. It is in this recollection and reiteration that normativity sustains itself.

While the 'Barbies' are stereotypical in their inescapable availability to the male mastermind, they are also sexually aggressive in their own desire for sexual pleasure. While their aggression certainly destabilizes the notion of women as passive, sexual objects, it may also be simply a reidealization of what Forbes refers to as 'rehabilitated heterosexuality'. She argues:

> Female (hetero)sexual desire and the uninhibited expression of this desire can be understood as virtually required of women, in this way further eroticizing femininity. Compared to the 19th and early 20th century, women today are constructed as eager, desiring subjects and willing participants, who, in order to achieve self-expression, are turning themselves into erotic objects of sexual consumption for men...Within a rehabilitated heterosexuality, women's sexuality is constructed as equal to men's, assertive, robust and voracious. (1996, 180)

This inarguably plays a part in the Barbie Girl performance. Butler, following Foucault, acknowledges that we are both subjectivated and enabled by dominant discourse. Discourses such as this view of 'rehabilitated heterosexuality' both enabled Heather and Nikki's critiques, as well as constraining their avenues of critique.

Heather and the other woman's sexual aggression is not only directed towards their male 'handler' but also towards each other. On one level, this undermines the 'natural' heterosexual imperative through their destabilizing of the boundaries between hetero and homosexual desire, as was discussed above, but on another, the 'lesbian' performances may be read as being for the pleasure of the male (dancer) voyeur and the males in the audience. However, there are still *both* normalizing and transgressive

elements. This is the poststructural perspective's strength.

I found a similar ambivalence in how Nikki and Heather conceptualized the intentions behind their performances. In the early part of Heather's interview, I asked her how she defined their performances. She defines it as performance art, clarifying: "dance troupe doesn't, a lot of people refer to is as that but it doesn't, I don't feel it taps into it enough. At least performance art you know that it's a broader, broader things to it, so that's usually how we categorize it" (Transcript One, lines 46-48). Looking back, the 'broader things' she spoke of were the political intentions that are usually associated with the term, *performance art*. This phrase signals to me some sort of feminist statement, although as will become evident here, this assumption was based in my own modernist feminist positioning. Nikki went further saying, "I would call it performance art, cause there's definitely an element of acting, more acting than dancing" (Transcript Two, lines 115-16). It seems as though both have a different meaning attached to performance art. I was looking for the consciously intentional feminist agent, but both Nikki and Heather presented a deep sense of ambivalence about their intentions. Later, in Heather's interview, since I had realized how our definitions of 'performance art' differed drastically, I described my own sense:

> so I may very much misunderstand it, in the sense that I've sort of thought it was like, 'Well, you know what, I want to put this sort of a message out and I'm going to use my body or and my art and my ability…to do this (Transcript One, lines 1312-1316)

To which Heather replied:

> It can be, and I mean Nikki might tell you something totally different for her, you know, and I , I mean definitely in some way and I also think part of it is, um, probably subconsciously I'm putting out issues, you know…I just, I don't sit down and go 'What do I want to say to the world? What is my message?' (lines 1317-1321)

This ambivalent pull between apparent, in the poststructural sense, agentic choice in their performances and a complete lack of intention is probably the most common theme that appeared throughout the two interviews. The first site of ambivalence I saw in the interviews is specific to their self-declared intentions; the second is in their views of themselves as gendered beings.

Earlier, I mentioned Heather's description of the 'Wet T-shirt Contest' part of the 'All You Can Eat' show. I would like to return here once more as the first point in the interview when her intentional ambivalence manifested itself. She argues, "I consider it making fun of sort of girl clichés…it's just really funny and I think it's, me personally, I consider it just making fun of so many different…clichés and people in the world" (Transcript One, lines 220-226). For Davies, self-perceived agency can be thought of as:

> the discursive constitution of a particular individual as having presence (rather than absence), as having access to a subject position in which they have the right to speak and be heard…Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert, and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted (2000, 66-67).

I would argue that this is exactly what is occurring in Heather and Nikki's mocking of

'girl clichés'. They are taking respected artistic speaking positions, drawing attention to the constructions that constitute them as women and attempting to subvert them through parody and humor. Regardless, of my own argument and constructions, shortly after Heather's description of the parodic 'Wet T-shirt Contest' she explicitly denied the possibility of the specific intention that I gathered from her comments. Thinking that they used their sometimes comedic performances as a means of public critique, I asked, "Do you, is comedy sort of a safe way to do that...like a safe vehicle of critique or..?" (lines 259-261) To which she retorted:

> Umm, I don't know, I think it's just to switch it up cause we like doing so many, I think it's just more interesting if if, if the energy level goes up and down and stuff and if we do more serious numbers where, whatever we're doing, I think it's just more interesting, that's why we...go that route. And the mocking it, I just think, [maybe] some people might not even see, see it come across that way, I mean, that's just my point of view. (lines 262-269)

Still persistently searching for the feminist agent, I tried to clarify: "So, is your intention to entertain? Um, or is it maybe to be critical or it is to make money?" (lines 27-28) After joking around about making very little money, she answered, "It's not, it's not to be critical, I don't think, well personally I'm not trying to make some big statement...it's basically to entertain and then if you want to make a statement here and there you can" (lines 283-295). There are a number of shifts throughout between a sense of intention and a sense of doing the performances for the pure joy of the experience. What is particularly interesting is the privileging of the performance on its own terms above any 'statements' that may come out of it or to the intentions potentially behind it.

In a 1996 interview, Butler defends herself against the accusation of the recuperability of subversive intention, a weakness that has been viewed by some as being politically disabling. Butler rejoins, critics are "right to say that any attempt at subversion is potentially recuperable. There is no way to safeguard against that. You can't plan or calculate subversion. In fact, I would say that subversion is precisely an incalculable effect" (121). I was looking for a calculable sense of subversion. Nikki and Heather illustrated this poststructural inability to intend and ensure certain political aims and results. There was an attendant consequence. Regardless of whether or not Heather and Nikki explicitly laid claim to intention, their own awareness of intention, the reactions of their female audiences and my own analysis of their performances all speak to the power of the performances to make political inroads, however incalculable in effect. Even if they wanted only to entertain their audiences, they also successfully made a number of statements, 'here and there'.

Later it became clear that one of the most salient aspect of their performances was their ability to 'blow boundaries'. I inquired if this was a goal of their performance art. Heather responded:

> I guess in a way because we know that [boundary blowing] works and that's sort of what the show is about but it's basically, we're not trying to be different, we're not trying to be, it's just how we have fun, how we express ourselves and that's just what comes out, we don't sit down and go, "Ok, what would really shock an audience"... there's no purpose thing where we're trying to be, we're gonna try

and be sexy, that's just what comes out, you know. (lines 982-88)

It may be tempting to make a modernist argument that 'what comes out' in the performances is the voice of the prediscursive core, which has escaped discursive constitution to speak out against its oppression. However, we are all both subjugated and resistively enabled by dominant discourse. Heather and Nikki made choices about their performances, but they chose their actions for a limited range of intelligible possibilities. Heather, in regards to boundary breakdown, directly argued, "I've made the show that way because of my views" (lines 1044). Certainly, the intentions of the show are complex issues. But while there were sometimes intentions behind the show, there was also an openness to whatever may come, whether enjoyment or empowerment. Butler argues that this is a characteristic of poststructural resistance. While this ambiguity may be unsettling to the various modernist feminist positions, we must not discount its subversive potential.

Nikki took a similarly ambivalent stance towards their intentions. She declared, "I mean, I'm not expecting people, like I'm not expecting to change the world or anyone's views but maybe just give them some other points to think about" (Transcript Two, lines 730-32). This problematizing and questioning of dominant discourse is at the heart of poststructural interrogations. They are possible regardless of the authors' intentions. It is this delimited intention and directive that perpetuates the openness and attempted inclusivity of the poststructural endeavor. Nikki and Heather may not specifically have intended their resistive statements, but the reaction of their female fans demonstrated that these statements and questions were taken up nonetheless. Interestingly, for Nikki, the 'intentions' of the show were inextricably linked with what she herself took out of the performances. In response to my questions about the intentions, she claimed, "one of the greatest things is just the look on [the audience's] faces...That's like one of the most rewarding things ever...It's therapy and I love to see the shock, you know, I love the shock value of what I do. I love shocking people. Um, I like entertaining people, bottom line" (lines 528-537).

With regards to any perceived intention, I had planned to go back and clarify what I constructed as their feminist orientation. However, in media coverage I found they had already been asked a similar question. Tongue-in-cheek, Nolan writes about 'All You Can Eat', "They've also been accused of 'promoting feminism.' They say this isn't part of their agenda, but they're happy if it gets promoted" (2001, 11). This is completely in line with Nikki and Heather's general intentional ambivalence. This ambivalence is not at all surprising given that sexual expression, their most obvious site of public problematization, "carries with it multiple and contradictory identities and experiences: loving and violence, pride and humiliation, empowerment and oppression, and pleasure and shame" (Gotfrit 1989, 14). It has only been in the coerced coherence of our modernist narrative that our experiences of sexuality, gender and resistance have been given a semblance of order and linear progression.

In her article "Lana's Imitation," Butler opens by quoting Stein, who says, "It's not extremely difficult not to have identity but it is extremely difficult the not knowing not having identity" (1990, 1). In subsequent publication, Butler articulates, "I'm permanently troubled by identity categories, consider them to be invariable stumbling blocks, and understand them, even promote them, as sites of necessary trouble" (1991, 14). While this troubling is invaluable there is the sense of a catch-22 that pervades Butler's work on the subversion of identity. While we may be able to flirt with and

entertain the notion that all the discourses through which we have been constituted and continue to constitute ourselves are phantasmatic in their foundations, an absolute acceptance of this would disable our understanding of ourselves as meaningful, intelligible beings. Categories, with all their attendant inclusions and exclusions, are at the heart of how we think and thus cannot be eliminated. Without comparison and clarification, all meaning systems would break down. The catch-22 is that we may have some sense or awareness of the untenability of our discourses, but presently we can never fully escape our current constructions. We cannot escape "the complex and multifarious power relations in contemporary society, which are such that individuals can be both dominated and empowered at the same time and in the context of the same [norms, institutions, and practices]" (Allen 1998, 459). Thus, even as we resist violent, exclusionary identity discourses we are fundamentally implicated within these relations of power and intelligibility. In her (re)articulation of Butler's work on subjugation in *The Psychic life of Power*, Mills writes:

> The disturbing consequence of the primary submission to power in order to exist is that the subject comes to desire the conditions of its own subordination in order to persist as a social being, since one would rather exist in subordination than not exist at all. Furthermore, in order to maintain one's existence, one is forced continually to re-enact the conditions of power that make one's existence possible. However, the assumption and re-enactment of power is not a straightforward process of mechanical reproduction [as]...in being reiterated or re-enacted, the relations of power are susceptible to transformation (2000, 269).

While there is definitely room for (re)articulation and subversive (re)working, we can never turn our backs on the real consequences of power relations and dominant discourses without risking our own intelligibility and existence. As Vasterling states, "noncompliance with the law of (heterosexual binary) sex results in depravation of subject status" (1999, 32). In order to *both* articulate ourselves in discourse and to resist dominant construction we must first reference these discourses, no matter how violent and exclusive they are and regardless of our dissatisfaction with them.

This catch-22 was very much at play in how Heather and Nikki defined themselves as gendered beings. Certainly their public boundary deconstruction was evident in their personal self-constructions, as they often failed to reference stereotypical gender descriptions, but they ultimately kept falling back into the modernist dichotomous views of gender. As Lloyd argues, "self-transformation always occurs within certain parameters; it is not creative work ex nihilo...while there is scope for active self-fashioning, the practices of self that the subject adopts are always in some way imbricated within or modulated by...existing (though not necessarily dominant) patterns of behavior" (1996, 247).

After discussing how she experienced their performances as powerful, I asked Nikki if this sense of empowerment carried on into her personal life. She went into the following self-description:

> Well, I'm kind of a bullshit kind of girl. You know if someone pisses me off I have no qualms to say it, you know, umm. I have strong opinions umm I'm crazy, I don't really care what anyone thinks of me. Umm, like me or leave me I don't really care...I don't really

> get intimidated that much by boys. I'm not a jealous person. I'm pretty secure with who I am…I don't like weak women. And I choose not to be around them…
> You know its funny cause I actually think I was suppose to be a man. I act more like a man. I act more like a man than my husband {both chuckle}…
> But as far as what, what being a woman means to me, I think that like being a woman's changed a lot since like, I was talking to my mom, like from when she was my age and stuff like that and I think that women these days have a responsibility to like, you know um, not be weak. And to be bold and to not let a man's world let you, stop you from doing anything. You know what I mean? If anything, like pull up your trousers and buckle up you know. Saddle up you know. Like I look at those challenges and that's what makes me wanna like accomplish things and and accomplish being a woman in a man's world or doing that like, you know, like I think like the most important thing for me is to just um be a good person and, and, and try to make all the females out there proud. (Transcript Two lines 653-685)

To clarify, I ask if she sees the validity of delineating masculine versus feminine roles, to which she vehemently responds:

> I think that's stupid. I don't think anyone should be a certain way… I think for everybody just be strong, believe in yourself kinda thing but I don't think that, I don't believe that women should be a certain way or men should be a certain way. I think that's totally up to the individual. (lines 693-96)

Throughout this self-description there are a number of ambivalent shifts. In the first section Nikki does not seem to be relying very heavily on dichotomous gender stereotypes. Indeed, her usage of the concept of strength, contrary to dominant discourse is being used in a more generic sense, is not necessarily coextensive with masculinity. Shortly thereafter, however, she reestablishes her self-understanding within the dichotomous constructions of gender because she is strong, secure, no bullshit kind of person, she should have been born a man. There is also a reliance on an essentialist construction of 'women'. While her identification with and desire to make 'all the females out there' proud, is a positive thing, it also signals a taking up of the exclusionary political identity category of women, in all its problematic aspects. In the last section of her dialogue, she returns to a more fluid, individual[8] notion of herself as a strong person. Clearly there are several aspects of modernist identity that have been deconstructed and reworked, but it remains obvious that there is a firmly entrenched reliance on the psychic safety of dominant discourse in her self-articulation.

This can also be seen in Heather's interview. In response to what being a woman means to her, Heather says:

> I think it's different for everyone and I don't think anything is right or wrong, so it's just how you feel but, I don't know, I don't define myself in any way really, I don't, I don't try and be a certain way, I

[8] I think there are problematic aspects of this individualism, but I will discuss this at length in a subsequent section.

> don't think. Um, I don't, I'm pretty, um, relaxed kind of person, I just kinda go with the flow and...I don't perceive myself in any particular mold or way. (Transcript One, lines 1185-89)

At the same time, she also expresses a belief in fundamental gender asymmetries, arguing, "I do think females project their sexuality a lot more, I mean that's just a given in society...I think it comes out with females more" (lines 1191-94). In response to nature versus nurture questions, she replied:

> I don't think it was put on me by society, it's just [feelings] that I wanted to express, maybe its just cause women express their emotions and feelings better {pause} but I think, yeah, I think women do that more...I guess both [nature and nurture] and it's just how it, how it comes out and probably the roles in society cause men are suppose to be the strong ones and it's not as, um, it's, people don't perceive it as strong to shake your hips around and stuff like that but, but, um, yeah I think maybe it is just naturally that that's why women are just more expressive, maybe they're just more in tune with their sexuality. (lines 1197-1207)

Here, again, there seems to be a strange mix of normativity and deconstruction. Heather acknowledges that it may just be dominant discourse that constructs men as powerful and 'feminine' activities such as dancing as nonpowerful, but she ultimately chooses an essentialist, naturalist explanation of her sexual self-expression. Despite the fact that I have constructed their performances as an example of poststructural political practice, given these complex, contrary brews of both Cartesian dichotomy and deconstruction, I think both Nikki and Heather themselves would refuse much of Butler's theoretical work.

This definitional ambivalence is not surprising given that "the citational process by which gender identity is constructed in language is ongoing and dynamic, involving a rule-bound *almost* compulsory of prevailing gender norms in which each mimicry of those norms forges one moment of their presence as a social order" (Barvosa-Carter 2001, 125). Indeed, Butler emphasizes that our gender performances and articulations always occur in a system of duress, one which has punitive consequences for those who fail in their gender presentations (1999, 177-78). What room Heather and Nikki do have for apparent agentic negotiation is in their limited ability to (re)signify gendered subjectivity. That is, not in their distance from discursive constitution but in their capacity to vary and negotiate this constitutive process. While they certainly challenge dominant discourse with feminist-type discourses of women as powerful agents, there is still much contradiction. As Davies points out, "one discourse that contradicts another does not undo one's constitution in terms of the original discourse" thus, "[one's] subjectivity is *therefore necessarily contradictory*" (2000, 57). As Wark has found in other performance artists' work, there are concomitant desires to shatter the idea of identity and various sexual and gender discourses as bounded and stable and to reconstitute something of and for themselves so that they can speak as powerful agentic subjects (2001). But it is important to note that the poststructurally constituted subjectivities that I have argued can be seen in Heather and Nikki's words occur in a particular space and time. Even in this particular configuration of contradiction and complexity, it is specific. Reliance on a fluid poststructural self, to the degree that this is possible, is not feasible in all aspects of our liberal modernist lives. What I have discussed here is a particular ambivalent subjectivity, rather than a stable subjecthood

that Heather and Nikki rely on regardless of context. I have not 'revealed' a new, more detailed account of their still transcendental identity, but have delved into one specific experience of their material experience and subjectivity.

Political Messes

We always make a mess. That's the thing. It's always a mess. We always get in trouble. Always. Yeah. Always messy.

Nikki (Transcript Two, lines 858-60)

Political messes. Is this what we are left with? Is this a bad thing? Why do I call this type of politics a mess? In *Bodies That Matter* Butler writes:

> [One] is, as it were, in power even as one opposes it, formed by it as one reworks it, and it is this simultaneity that is at once the condition of our partiality, the measure of our political unknowingness, and also the condition of action itself. The incalculable effects of action are as much a part of their subversive promise as those that we plan in advance. (1993, 241).

It is this incalculable nature of poststructural politics that unsettles me and forces me to ask if we are indeed left with a political mess. It is only because identity politics champions have always claimed that the effects of direct feminist political intervention would have calculable results that I am hesitant. From my modernist feminist positions, I am made uneasy by ambiguity and uncertainty only because I have been taught that they can be eliminated. As we all know, such positivist constructions were often only a theoretical and rhetorical sleight of hand. I must admit here that I cannot predict the future of poststructural politics, but I feel the need to give it a chance to bear itself out and while this may disconcert me, it is only because of my past and current positions. I want to be able to demand certain political ends, but as one member of the Guerrilla Girls articulated in a 1991 interview, "[making] demands are the tactics of the 70s and let's face it, they didn't really work very well. So we decided to try another way: humor, irony, intimidation and poking fun" (in Demo 2000, 135). I would not agree that nothing came out of these '70s' political demands, but I would acknowledge that there is room and need for a new form of politics. Heather clarifies, "I just think the message would be just for people to loosen up and relax and laugh at things and, you know, not take things so seriously" (Transcript One, lines 229-31). As a person who often takes her feminist politics deadly seriously, such political stances cause me understandable ambivalence.

For me, Heather and Nikki's "playfully ironic brand of feminism redefines popular images of feminism" (Demo 2000, 151). This both exhilarates and frightens me. As Nolan said about the 'All You Can Eat' performers, "they don't really live to push the boundaries per se, although this is often a result of their work. What they do like is to dance and to perform. If more times than not their self-expression turns rather sexual, well, that just happens to be a part of who they are" (2001, 11). I think it has always been the case for feminists, "[we] are always losing and winning, kicking butt and getting trashed, all at the same time, in both our personal and political lives" (Rapping 1996, 271). These poststructural political endeavors, in all their complexities and contradictory productivity, are simply another way that we, as feminists, will continue to do this.

For Butler, acts of potential subversion are "not entered into deliberately or voluntarily (in the modernist senses of the words) but rather is a process which subjects are compelled to enter into insofar as they are constituted in and through relations of power in society" (Webster 2000, 11). Nikki and Heather certainly seem compelled to

act. For them it is an issue of mental health. Expressive performance is therapy for them, an outlet. Speaking to how she does or does not feel different in different contexts, such as performing for a predominantly gay or predominantly heterosexual crowd, Heather argues:

> I don't think it changes how I feel on stage, I think I'm the same for both...you get the Shocore crowd, you know they're they're getting into it in that (sexual) sense but it doesn't effect how, how I perform cause I'm just expressing myself, you know, I'm not, it doesn't matter to me if the audience doesn't get turned on by me or whatever, you know, like, it's just, that doesn't, it doesn't change my performances. (Transcript One, lines 719-24)

But why do they act? And what of people that are constituted by the same power relations and not compelled to act? Here Butler cannot adequately answer all my questions. Many theorists agree with Rothenberg and Valente in their argument that "despite the clearly anti-voluntarist thrust of her theory, Butler recurs [sic] repeatedly to a volitional model of subjectivity, asserting a willed citationality" (1997, 296). This may derive from the misconception that Butler's usage of the word *agency* relies on a modernist foundation of a prediscursive core, when it really means a poststructural subject position that is only an apparent choice. One must still ask, where is there room for the self-reflection that seems to be necessary for conscious, directed political action? And, is directed– in the sense of being calculable– action even possible or desirable?

As Seyla Benhabib, one of Butler's most vocal critics, maintains, "while Butler [has] identified agency as the ability to vary the repetition of gender performances, she [has] yet to identify the factor that enables such variations to take place"; as mentioned, her work "begs the question of what factors or conditions enable the iterative agency she theorizes" (in Barvosa-Carter 2001, 126). It would be fallacious to argue that there is no room or possibility of agency in Butler's work, because while she attempts to give an account of the discursive construction of the subject, eschewing any appeal to the prediscursive core, she acknowledges that critical orientations can be present, although she emphasizes that they too are constructed and constituted in power (Stern 2000, 115).

Edwina Barvosa-Carter has struggled productively with some of the inadequacies of Butler's writing. She argues that agency's source can be found in the detailed examination of the web of 'enabling constraints' that Butler proposes exists in the world (2001, 127). Within this web are the 'tools' by which we are both subjugated and enabled. These tools, though not of our own making and while experienced as violent and oppressive, are what can (re)signify dominant discourse. Given we are always constituted by a multiplicity of shifting social positions, we always negotiate with a number of different, often contradictory, discourses (127). We rely on these discourses to construct various identities, such as human, woman, Canadian, etc. For Barvosa-Carter, agency is born out of this multiplicity. She contends:

> As the subject picks up one set of tools (i.e., inhabits one of several identities) and leaves other sets of tools aside in a given context, the taking up of one set of tools vis-à-vis another gives the self a reflexive space, a critical distance, and a competing perspective (via the socially constituted set of meanings, values, and practices that comprise those tools) with which it can see anew, critique, and potentially vary its own

> identity performances. *The reflexive space needed to vary performative actions as an agent is thus provided by the subject's multiplicity of subject positions*. (2001, 127 empasis added)

Certainly, Barvosa-Carter's analysis is useful. However, as Davies has illustrated (2000), this critical space is only enabled by–and still constrained by–the range of available discourses. Further, the resultant agency that Barvosa-Carter theorizes is only an apparent choosing of action because we only have a limited range of choices, and how we make those choices is also constituted and constrained, but never determined, by various discourses. It may be in Heather and Nikki's taking up of person, woman, daughter, wife/partner, artist, middle-class or Caucasian categories as tools, that their contradiction and dissonance generates a critical space, even if it is constructed. While Nikki and Heather are not apparently positioned in multiple minority positions, in their failure, as women, to conform to the ideal Western modernist model of human, there is room for critical appraisal. Personal experiences may not 'fit' the story but they still exist. Indeed, Butler argues, "[the] coexistence or convergence of such discursive injunctions (such as to be a good mother, a fit worker or a heterosexually desirable object) produces the possibility of a complex reconfiguration and redeployment; it is not the transcendental subject who enables action in the midst of such convergence" (1999, 184).

In Barvosa-Carter's constructions we see our potential to negotiate within and between discourses, to explore how they constitute us, and use contradictory discourses to counteract others and go beyond them all (Davies 2000, 60). This is an invaluable contribution to the theorizing of poststructuralist politics, which has often been accused of being disabling to active politics. It is not politics per se that is disabled. Indeed, Butler is revealing the weaknesses inherent in identity politics (1999, 7-8). From our conversations, it certainly does not seem that Heather and Nikki were aware of the roots of their agency, as conceived by Barvosa-Carter. Their motivation seemed more about staying active, artistically productive and mentally healthy. I did not find out what motivated their critical stances. For them, boundary shattering critiques that came out of their work were secondary to its value as artistic experience. Why did I see in their words a more critical view of the world than could be found in many other women's perspectives? Since I have no answer, the pertinent question still remains: 'why do they act in ways that can be read as politically powerful, even though they do not articulate conscious political intentions?'

Despite my discomfort–most likely because of it–I regard Butler's "account of political practice as a radical vision that illustrates how everyday *individual* acts of signification can indeed make inroads to change–and do so under the very regime that would perpetuate a status quo heterosexist gender order" (Barvosa-Carter 2001, 129 emphasis added). It is this individual tendency that I see as being the most potentially disadvantageous aspect of poststructural politics. Like many theorists (Allen 1998, Schrift 1997, Mills 2000), I question Butler's difficulty in theorizing collective resistance. Since Butler and other poststructural interventions, collectivity has become more difficult, but arguably more productive, to theorize. In Heather and Nikki's performances, there was an individualist orientation, that I, as a feminist shaped by the second-wave, found unsettling. Nussbaum accuses:

> The great tragedy in the new feminist theory in America is the loss of a sense of public commitment. In this sense, Butler's self-involved

> feminism is extremely American, and it is not surprising that it has caught on here, where successful middle-class people prefer to focus on cultivating the self rather than thinking in a way that helps the material conditions of others. (1999, 43)

While this seems alarmist, part of a feminist backlash lamenting the 'good old days', I think that we must be careful to remain attentive to this individuality, a central characteristic of early 21st century life. Ideally such attention will ensure the "[the] operation of gender in social, political and economic institutions [does not disappear] as the psychodrama of the desiring self is played out" (Hawkesworth 1997, 668). This is not to say that I believe that a poststructural politics does not have the capacity to enact change in all spheres of life. It is *only* the breakdown of conventional hierarchical dichotomous discourse that will open up the social and personal worlds to new imagination and reconfiguration, but we must always consider both individualist and collective political activism. As Bordo argues, "too relentless a focus on historical heterogeneity, for example, can obscure the transhistorical patterns of (heterosexual) white, male privilege that have informed the creation of the Western intellectual [traditions]" that poststructuralism seeks to dismantle (1990, 149). A purely individualist focus "leaves untouched the subject's understanding of her conditions of oppression" (Deveaux 1994, 238). It was particularly evident throughout Nikki's interview that she acknowledges the effects of living in a 'man's world,' but her strategies to counteract such conditions were predominantly individualistic. Again, individual political resistance is invaluable, but its successes can only be strengthened and reinforced by concomitant collective, though not necessarily identity-based political activism.

This individualism can be seen as both a positive and negative characteristic of poststructural subjectivities. While Nikki and Heather both refuse to be limited by conventional sexual and gender discourses, their focus on what they can do as powerful individual women does not negate structural social inequality. The atomistic perspective is particularly evident in their discussions of how they see themselves as women. As I mentioned earlier, Nikki said, "I think that women have a responsibility to…not be weak. And to be bold and not let a man's world…stop you from doing anything…If anything, like pull up your trousers and buckle up you know. Saddle up" (Transcript Two, lines 678-81). Inspiring words, certainly. However, focusing on individual responsibilities to succeed and be powerful women neglects the structural inequalities women face. There is a similar focus in Heather's own self-description: "I don't think I'm constrained (by conventional gender norms) at all but that's just my personality" (Transcript One, lines 1037-38). Celebrating such experiences of empowerment is a valid goal of feminist research, but it must not be its only goal. One instance where individualist orientation became particularly salient and distressing was during Nikki's account of a time 'All You Can Eat' tackled the experience of sexual assault. She recalls:

> Like rape or like one issue we did was um like um, you know, girls, girls that get raped or something like that was um we put a twist on like, instead of her being the one that's being raped is we turned it where she was getting raped she started to enjoy it…But its like in the end we made the guy look like the asshole. You know what I mean. We made the girl look like the strong one that like took over the situation and like switched it so where he was the powerless one and she was like you know,

turning on him. (Transcript Two, lines 341-353)

I applaud them for exploring an empowered, aggressive construction of women's sexuality. However, such attempts at rearticulating sexual assault ignores the socially condoned violence at the root of sexual assault. The failure to consider material social realities weakens feminist efforts to theorize and enact political change.

While remaining suspicious of this particular aspect of potential poststructuralist subjectivities, I remain convinced of the value of Nikki and Heather's performances for resistive politics. Further, despite the individualism in their performances, these performances go well beyond personal experience. Mullin argues, "strictly speaking, we can assess whether or not a work of art is feminist only by understanding how it is received by its audience or audiences. An artist cannot be sure whether or not his or her work is feminist on the basis of the artist's intention alone" (2000, 119). While reception will never be monolithic, coherent or stable, I read Heather and Nikki's performances as feminist art. Not only is there self-empowerment for Nikki and Heather, but also for those to whom the performances speak. No political act can ever be stably defined. Heather and Nikki's performances are neither purely subversive nor normative, neither purely individual nor collective, and certainly not a solution to all the problems that have plagued feminism's reliance on exclusionary identity politics. Rather than either lamenting the messy, complex, contradictory nature of poststructural politics or celebrating its efforts to the exclusion of all other political endeavors, feminist theory must negotiate and deconstruct the desire to set up oppositional camps. Despite the fierce debates that rage between poststructuralism and identity politics, change, for good and bad, is occurring. New political subjectivities are emerging and to continue making political inroads, we must have the flexibility to account for diversity in activism and experience.

Many have attacked the poststructural privileging of positionality. As Mann argues:

> We recognize the 'multiple subject positions' of each individual. The problem is that this more adequately descriptive notion of political positionality threatens to compound the consciousness of oppression while removing any clear sense of group-based political agency. Instead of identifying women in relation to a single form of patriarchal domination, we recognize the racial and cultural complexity of domination suffered by women. In place of a reductive identity politics of feminist solidarity against male oppressors, we sympathetically create subjects of multiple forms of oppression who are likely to experience themselves as politically alone and impotent. (1994, 159)

This is not the case with Heather and Nikki, but it is a general possibility. However, the disaggregation of our various identities forces us to negotiate and (re)make ourselves everyday, which opens up a number of new freedoms and possibilities not previously acknowledged. Butler maintains that group politics is useful, necessary and possible, but that the shared characteristics of that group must always be open to contestation and (re)negotiation. In a 1996 interview, Butler states, "We need a shared collective ground for collective action. I think we need to pursue the moments of degrounding, when we're standing in two different places at once; or we don't know exactly where we're standing" (122). This romanticization of ambiguity has much potential and exciting possibility, but

it can cause a sense of vertigo. The fluidity and ambiguity needed to activate a politics that encompasses various experiences of individuality and collectivity is frightening to many. It is the very transgression of boundaries inherent in poststructural approaches that elicits fear. As Manners facetiously contends, "those who cross and re-cross borders distort all sorts of boundaries, split identities into more that two neat halves, cannot be trusted to be where or do what they are supposed to. Like the clitoris, inside and outside, difficult to put to 'use'" (1999, 29). Interestingly, Butler's poststructuralism finds agency in exactly the moment of disruption and (re)iteration where politics of representation found it most at risk (Jenkins 2001, 364). Liberation entails liberation from identity (Fraser 1991, 175).

Clearly a dichotomous division between poststructural politics and identity politics is not useful or even, for that matter, in the spirit of deconstruction. Davies emphatically articulates, "[the] *point* of poststructuralism is not to destroy the humanist subject nor to create its binary other, the 'anti-humanist subject' (whatever that might be), but to enable us to see the subject's fictionality, while recognizing how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real" (2000, 133 emphasis in original). Refusing to negotiate between a broader collective politics and poststructural politics of individual deconstruction reduces the efficacy of both forms. I agree with Marshall in her demand that we take seriously the task of destabilizing the boundaries between poststructural/ representative and collective/ individual politics (2000, 154). As the current social world and its recognition of intelligibility are firmly entrenched in identity politics, we must not turn our backs on such endeavors, but must remain aware that privileged identities are fictive. 'Woman' or 'homosexual' must not have a priori meaning, but must be a possible site of recognition. Marshall cogently asks, "How can we struggle against obdurately structured gender (and other) dualism if we take it, no matter how reluctantly, as our ontological foundation?" (2000, 256)

Butler herself has acknowledged the necessity of participating in representational politics. In *Contingent Foundations*, she writes:

> Within feminism, it seems as if there is some political necessity to speak as and for *women*, and I would not contest that necessity. Surely, that is the way in which representational politics operates, and in this country, lobbying efforts are virtually impossible without recourse to identity politics. (1992, 15 emphasis in original)

Keeping identity categories open to contestation and resignification will make this possible without falling into the exclusionary violence of modernist identity politics. This openness is not a weakness or a breakdown in politics. Rather, "[to] deconstruct the subject of feminism is not, then, to censure its usage, but on the contrary, to release the term into a future of multiple significations, to emancipate it from the maternal or racialist ontologies to which it has been restricted" (Butler 1992, 16). A poststructural attempt to destabilize the hierarchical, exclusionary dichotomies on which all our dominant discourses are based should remain our imperative. However, "because the language and logic of liberalism still occupy the progressive edge of the possible in mainstream [North American] politics" (Duggan 1992, 27), we must use the subversive potential of a poststructuralism to (re)work forms of collective resistance and association. Butler refers to this as a 'strategic provisionality' in the signs we rally around (1991, 19).

Given her theory's philosophical nature, Butler concedes that her work is not a

blueprint for equality revolution. She clarifies in her later work that her theory is not politically exhausting "as if an undermining were enough to establish and direct political struggle" (1993, 240). She only claims:

> performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, that turning power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a 'pure' opposition, a 'transcendence' of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (1993, 241).

It is interesting and ironic that it is in the very concreteness of the binary gender system and in our firm positions within it that Butler finds hope. The relations that assert their claims to reality give us the 'tools' to subvert them. In taking up these tools, we can dismantle the restrictive relations that offered them. Butler does not provide a map for gender emancipation and her insights themselves do not "constitute a political revolution", but "no political revolution is possible without a radical shift in one's notion of the possible and the real" (1999, xxiii). Butler's strengths as a political theorist lie in what she makes imaginable and possible. Poststructural destabilization is feminism's most effective tool but must be negotiated with and used to improve current political strategies. This poststructural move is limitless in its possibilities but it "means giving up the 'feminine' as a privileged identity and acknowledging the possibility of multiple nuances and combinations of gender (and sexuality) which may eventually bring down the whole historical construction man/woman" (Reinelt 1989, 51).

While Heather and Nikki's subversive performances are one example of poststructural political subjectivity, theirs is not the only possible form of intervention. Relying exclusively on poststructural critiques of discourse ignores the current representational political reality in Canada and the U.S. Falling back into a strict reliance on representational politics is not possible, as the exclusivity and violence of identity politics has been too thoroughly demonstrated by poststructural theorists. "The critical task is...to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them" (Butler 1999, 188). I would argue that such a critical task is but *one* among many. Nikki and Heather's performances are exciting in their complexity, contradiction and radical subversive potential, but do not represent the full gamut of political possibility.

While struggling with some of the limitations I saw in Heather's and Nikki's performances as political intervention, I also struggled with what type of specifically feminist intervention I constructed this as. Williams argues that many women have rejected feminism due to its association "with an all-or-nothing understanding of what is good for women, with often self-righteous positions that know for sure on which side of any binary opposition a 'proper' feminism belongs" (1997, 362). While this certainly may be the case there is a vital poststructuralism located within, rather than outside or beyond, feminism. Some authors have offered the notion of post-feminism as a solution to this quandary. Reynolds and Press write:

> Post-feminism bears a relation to feminist similar to that of post-modernism to modernism: Playful where its predecessor was sober, flaunting an ironic and provisional sense of identity where

> the earlier –isms believed in an authentic self. Both the post-formations alarmed and offended traditionalists who insist that their respective –isms could hardly be over because their job had never been completed. Perhaps the best way to conceive of post-feminism/post-modernism is as the next phase of feminism/modernism, not its repudiation and supercession. (1995, 317)

This seems more accurate but I am still hesitant to use the post-feminist label. Perhaps this is only because I associate myself with the 'traditionalists'. I see poststructural political endeavors, such as seen in Nikki and Heather's performances, as inextricably tied up with feminist goals of equality and freedom. I acknowledge the problematics inherent in these thoroughly modernist notions, which have been at the core of 'feminist' efforts throughout time. In this sense, I think that it is productive to see poststructuralist feminist endeavors as being born from second-wave critiques. I am deeply unsettled by attempts to separate 'old' feminism from a presumably superior 'post'. All political perspectives and interventions have their strengths and weaknesses, as in Heather and Nikki's performances, and none can be constructed as a definitive solution to inequality. Like our own constant (re)elaborations and (re)iterations of identity discourses, feminism itself is also a site of constant (re)elaboration, contradiction and contestation. The future of feminist political inroads is "to be found in straddling and connecting: in hybrids, affinities, coalitions, contradictions and localized politics" (Arneil 1999, 212).

In wrapping up this thesis, I was tempted to provide a 'neat' package of how localized political endeavors such as Heather and Nikki's performances, in concert with larger poststructurally-informed, provisional identity politics are paradigmatic of how equality will be achieved. In some ways, I have still attempted to do this despite my desire not to. I have tried to reinforce that there are a number of inescapable, but fundamentally productive, negotiations that a poststructurally informed feminism must make.

Ultimately, the main hope I have for this project is that it contributes to the wealth of feminist discourse that "[falsifies] cultural generalizations about the eternally victimized position of women" (Butler 1994, 15), while at the same time emphasizing that a concomitant attention to the complexities of structural inequality is necessary. I do not know where these political commitments will take feminism, but I celebrate the openness.

> Political trajectories that eschew the route of the political program in favor of a set of mechanisms for tackling daily living; trajectories centered around critique and the possibility of producing new modes of subjectivity (as yet, not guessed at). It is precisely this lack of pre-scription (the adumbration in advance of the details of political struggle), however, that is also unsettling for feminism. (Lloyd 1996, 260)

As someone vested in feminist academia, I too am made anxious by poststructural politics, but I remain committed to its unimagined possibilities. It is the dichotomies foundational of Western thought, which must be deconstructed for equality to even be conceivable. I hope that this work emerges as a successful "tracing [of] the contested emergence of [new poststructural subjectivities] through time and space in relation to thinking subjects, who sometimes appropriate dominant identities and who sometimes contest or change them" (Nelson 1999, 342). The concluding words, which apply to my

work as well, are appropriately those of Heather:

> Generally I think people are a little too uptight with um, with the normal roles we're suppose to play…in society. I think people need to loosen up a little bit with that and I think we kind of help that in our own little way for some people. (Transcript One, lines 1351-55)

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Appendix A
Interview One Transcript
Heather Robertson/Sweetheat

B: {inaudible} Ok perfect
H: Ok
B: Ok, so we'll start the interview now, now
H: Ok
B: Umm, first thing I did want to say, I've already said this but again if there's absolutely anything you don't want to talk about, or uncomfortable, if you're unclear about anything I'm asking, just ask and I'll …
H: Ok
B: …clarify, we can not do anything you (don't) want, absolutely this is all under your control.
H: Ok
B: Um, so first I just want to ask, did you guys, um, since you're not working with Shocore anymore…
H: Umhuh
B: …do you want to um let's say when I'm writing things up do want your stages names used or let's say your first names, your own personal first names?
H: Umm, either or whatever you want to use I don't mind.
B: Ok
H: The, you can just use my first name or…
B: Ok
H: …or our little stage names that we still use.
B: Ok so you use {both talking-inaudible}
H: Mine was Sweetheat, yes.
B: Yes, ok, ok, yep, yep…umm, ok
H: But whatever you want to use, I don't mind
B: Ok. Ok. Umm, now these are just the sort a few little preliminary ones, I want to get out of the way.
H: Ok
B: Umm, I'd ask, obviously you have a partner…
H: Umhm
B: … a male partner. So do you identify as heterosexual or…
H: Yup
B: You do, ok, perfect.
H: Uhum
B: Umm, let's see and this is kind of I'm not sure how would you identify your performances, um, would you consider them…
H: Categorize them?
B: …exotic dancing…
H: No
B: just dancing? Ok , ok
H: Usually, um, especially cause what you saw, that sort of schtick we do as um, basic/ , like I said on our show 'All You Can Eat'…
B: Umhuh
H: …and when we have to identify it we just call it performance art Dancing…
B: Perfect, yeah.
H: …because dance troupe doesn't, a lot of people refer to us as that but it doesn't, I

don't feel it sort of taps into it enough. At least performance art you know that it's a broader, {inhales} broader things to it, so that's Usually how we categorize it.
B: Ok, perfect. That's very interesting, wonderful{both chuckle}
B: See I have, I'm always like 'yeah, yeah' {Heather chuckles}, see I'm horrible for sort of injecting when I really, you know
H: Yeah
B: I try to be more…
H: Ok {both chuckle}
B: less interested.
H: Yeah really
B: You know what I'm saying {both chuckle}
B: Umm, soo your performances with you tour, and then you have your performances with various bands…
H: Umhm
B: …including Shocore…
H: Umhm
B: …how would you, how would you consider them, do you consider them to be the same thing or are they very different because of there's a different audience or how do you?
H: Umm, comparing our shows to like band stuff?
B: Yes, yeah.
H: It's pretty similar, we always incorporate what, we always keep in mind what the show is, what show we're doing, like we could do a Burlesque show if we were asked to or, or we know that when we do our show for example if it's at a Gay club, then we'd want to incorporate things like we know the gay audience like things more flamBoyant and they love the sexual pokes {Brandy chuckles}and the funny stuff and the crazy, so we try and go for that more, whereas if we're at a {inhales} rock bar then we know they want to see more sexy Girls…
B: Umhm
H: …you know, we just keep in mind what people Want and what the audience IS. And so like with Shocore it was, we just, we knew their music and we just, it was very similar to a lot of stuff we do in our show but we kept in mind what works with a band on stage, what works for this audience, for this music, it's a rock show…
B: Umhm
H: …like we have to, we have to go with That, we're not doing our own show we have to incorporate to be with them {inhales}
B: So, um {swallows}, it sounds like you really Control a lot of your performances, are you…
H: Umhm
B: …in sole control of them? Like do you, do you uh do all the choreography?
H: Umhm
B: Ok, ok.
H: Nikki and I, well for 'All You Can Eat', [male name] and I, a guy, my friend that um moved to Toronto, we started it but Nikki and I {inhales} have taken it over, so with like what we've done, me and Nikki pretty much work as a team now for that kind of stuff and whether we're doing Shocore or other bands or 'All You Can Eat' we're definitely,

um, in control of everything, costumes…
B: Ok.
H: …we pick the music, unless it's of course…
B: Yeah
H: … a band where we're given the music. Um, pick the costumes, pick, do the choreography, Everything. Um, and if there's other people in our group, or if it's not just me and Nikki doing it, um, performing together, if there's other people involved then if they want to throw in ideas that's fine
B: Ok
H: … but we sort of ok it all and make sure…
B: Ok
H: …it's, it's what we want and what we agree with And also Shocore, I mean, for example Shocore they just said {inhales} you know, we knew that like, we started off doing a lot more free-styling on stage and they said no we want it to be like doing the same thing more even though…
B: Umhm
H: …we had a lot of similar choreography but so we had to change it a bit, so it's just sort a, but we always are in…
B: Ok
H: …control and have the final say of what we want to do.
B: Perfect
H: And our ideas, the THemes that you saw with Shocore, like the costume ideas or whatever…
B: Umhm. Umhm.
H: … it was all ours
B: Ok, is it, was there any or have you ran a time when, I guess, I don't know if this the right word, I'm not really creatively inclined…
H: Umhm
B: …but the the the idea of creative differences between let's say, I don't know…
H: Ok
B: …if there's a manager of Shocore or other bands and…
H: Umm…
B: …has there been a clash?
H: Well, {inhales} not really, there's been clash with, not with them telling us what to do, they've always, we've always just experienced, we've been lucky enough I guess, people have Loved what we do. {Brandy chuckles}There's been the odd thing where if Shocore did a couple of all ages shows, like we did a roller wink, rink once, where they didn't, it was, I mean it was midnight and it was a rock show but still we got some complaints but as far as that was concern if it had been 'All You Can Eat', we would have been responcible for that but…
B: Umhm
H: …we were just, we're hired by Shocore, We're doing this thing, this is what they've ok'd for us to do and so it's not up to us…
B: No, yeah
H: …I'm not going to get in, you know, trouble cause it's not, it's their schtick, so
B: Yeah, yeah.

H: {swallows} So there, but there's never been a conflict with, um, with any sort of authority figure really that's hired us…
B: Ok
H: …I don't think.
B: So they've never asked you to do anything you weren't comfortable with or?
H: No, not at all.
B: So it sounds…
H: No, they they always, I mean maybe that's just cause we've been lucky who we've worked with…
B: Umhm
H: …but we've just been told sort of guide, {inhales} not even been, well we've been sort of given just our own freedom to Do it and and that's it. They wouldn't, we've never been asked t/, it's always been our ideas…
B: Ok
H: …no one's ever told us what to do so there's never been that conflict.
B: Ok, so you said, um, I, I'm just really kind of going on a tangent here, you said that, um, you've been lucky, people really seem to like what you do…
H: Umhm
B: …so why do yo/, why do you think there's the appeal, what do you think people like about it?
H: I think because it seems like no matter what crowds we do, even in clubs or whatever, that even if it's {inhales} an older audience, or a more, um, tame audience, or whatever, that people just like it because I think it's, for one it's definitely entertaining, and it's just out of the ordinary, it something that you just don't see here in Vancouver, that's sort of dance show kind of thing that's entertaining that way and the sexiness of it, I mean that's appealing to guys but I find that even girls like because we're not being sexy in a way that's 'Oh, look at us, aren't we hot?' like the little victim sex thing, it's, we're always in Control, we're tuned into because we're Strong, we come across as Strong, powerful women and so I think it's not threatening, in that sense, I think a lot of times women would get offended seeing that just cause it's, I don't know, I , they, women can come across as such victims…
B: Umhm
H: …and, you know, it's being sexy is {inhales} but I think with us it comes aCROss differently.
B: Ok, so the issue of, I think that's really important, that you're in conTRol of…
H: Umhm
B: …the performance, is uh, yeah, I think that's…
H: Like I don't agree with dancing around sexy and stuff if you're coming across as weak and sort of being victimized by the audience and you know what I mean?
B: Yeah
H: I think it, it's different if, if it's, um, and also cause I believe we have talent in what we do, we're not just walking around {inhales} you know we're doing choreography, we've trained our whole lives as dancers…
B: Ok
H: …and I think that comes through as well, it's, it's an art/, it comes to an artistic thing not just a {pause} exploitive thing or a

B: Umhm, do you consider you performances very, um, removed from let's say what you would, uh, find in a, uh, uh, uh, gentleman's club or strip joint…
H: Umhm
B: …or whatever?
H: Umm, I, a well I do but it also depends on what you're seeing us do. When we do 'All You Can Eat' we Definitely not, it's not always sexy and sometimes, you know, it's just fUnny or we're, you know, doing spoofs on things, on cheerleaders or whatever, you know, it's not just the hard core sexy thing.
B: Ok
H: But sometimes, like some things we've done with Shocore, we/ were I'd say similar to things you might see in a strip club but I, I think it's totally different because it's choreographed, it's you know…
B: Umhm
H: …there's themes or whatever, I just think it's, it's only similar in the sense that sometimes we've tried to seduce and be sexy and try, you know…
B: Umhm
H: …in that sense it's similar, but I think it ends there.
B: Ok, so tell me a little about 'All You Can Eat'. Uh, it sounds really interesting, I obviously, I just saw the Shocore show but
H: Umm, well it's usually five dancers, sometimes we get a fire juggler or one guy that does this robot act that's really cool to do it, but, um, it's usually a 20 minute long show, what you saw with Shocore was just a big take off of, a take off of that. Shocore loved 'All You Can Eat', which is why they hired us for this stuff and cause we're, we're friends with them but, um, but um, basically it's just like a 20 minute show, well usually it will be in clubs or whatever and it's just {inhales} we take songs, uh, from artists, whoever, Beastie Boys, th/ you know, just any kind of music we want to use and usually a minute or two minute numbers and it's maybe it will be me and Nikki and the next number it will be all five of us and then it'll be a guy number…
B: Umhm
H: …or whatever and it's just, uh, we explore different things, like me and Nikki will a number, Nikki and I will do a number were we're baking a Cake and we're throwing eggs and flour and dancing and we have little tutus on and we're going crazy and still doing choreography but it's really cute and then the boys will do like a number to Sabatoge and be robbers and dancing and or we'll do like spoofs like the, sometimes it gets a little crazy but it's funny, like we have this thing called the 'Wet Tee-Shirt Contest' but it's a total spoof on, um, I, I consider it making Fun of sort of girl clichés, like Nikki comes on and she's dancing around, she's contestant number one, like she's a stripper or whatever, but it's really funny and I come out and I'm just really drunk and I pass out and I get wet anyway and it's just really funny and I think it's, me personally, I consider it just making fun of So many different…
B: Umhm
H: …clichés and people in the world {chuckles}
B: So is that the message you would like people to Take away from the show?
H: In some sense, I think it's funny, like, I mean there are some numbers where we are just being Sexy and that kind of thing but, but I don't know it's just crazy and I just think the message would just be for people to loosen up and relax and laugh at things and, you

know, not take things so seriously or that's what I think sometimes.
B: So where do you go for inspiration for your performances, like do you look towards, like, female, like, women females in rock or?
H: Not really, most of our ideas come from us just sitting around and talking or one evening we'll be having a glass of wine or whatever and we'll talk about 'Oh, wouldn't it be funny to do this' or we'll hear a song we want to use and then take the idea from there or it just comes sporadically. I don't think we act/ actually look to anything else for it, it just sort of comes to us pretty much
B: Ok {chuckles} Umm, I was just thinking, sorry there was a a question came to me, just think about it for one second. Um. {long pause} I don't know {muffled}. So by, ok yes, sorry, you had, um, emphasized that it was been sort of, um, saying that it it's very comedic…
H: Umhm, Some of it.
B: …okay, some of it…
H: Umhm
B: …what would you say the primary, um, character/, is it, is it like a humorous, sexy performance {chuckles} or…
H: Well, the funny parts, I mean it's definitely not all funny, but there I'm just saying there some numbers that are. Basically, it does I think, I guess the big thing that comes across most is the sexuality.
B: Ok
H: I'd say that's the primary thing that comes across.
B: Ok. And, um, so is it, is the comedy, do you use it sort of a as a critique of of barr/, like you, you've mentioned, um, you know, it's sort of mocking, not mocking…
H: Umhm
B: …I don't want to use the word mocking…
H: Yeah
B: But yeah sort of mocking, you know, a lot of people in the world, a lot of views of women, um, thing like that. Do you, is the comedy sort of a Safe way to do that…
H: Hmm
B: …like a safe vehicle of critique or?
H: Umm, I don't know, I think it's just to switch it up cause we like doing so many, I think it's just more interesting if it, if the energy level goes up and down and stuff and if we do some serious number where, whatever we're doing, I think it's just more interesting, I think that's why we do it. And that's, yeah, I just think it's more interesting, that's why we…
B: Ok
H: …go that route. And the mocking it, I just think, may/ some people might not even see, see it come across that way, I mean, that's just my point of view, you know what I mean…
B: Yes, oh yeah.
H: …but um, but yeah I I don't know what the real reason, it's just cause, you know, that's what we'll find funny at the time or that's what suits a song and it's just to switch it up, to keep the show interesting…
B: Umhm
H: …from serious to sexy to funny to, you know?

B: So, is your intention to entertain? Um, or is it maybe to be critical or is it to be make money? {chuckles}
H: See…
B: Like what?
H: …no, we definitely don't make enough money.
B: {laughs}
H: But um, it's not, it's not to be critical, I don't think, well personally I'm not trying to make some big Statement…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …I really am not but I think, it's basically just to entertain you and it's for us to enjoy it because, you know, Nikki and I both have lived in LA for a couple of years and the dance industry is so huge there and here it's really not and there's not that much going on, you know, it's the Grizzly Girls dance team or whatever it is, it's no/ or there's just not a lot of a lot of stuff going on here so we just, we do it to keep ourSelves happy and sane and we just love doing it and people enjoy it so that's great and that's why we're still doing it cause we have, we have an audience, umm, and it's, you know, growing and I like the venue of going into dancing with fans and stuff to the live music, it's fun. But it's just, yeah, it's basically to entertain and and then if you want to make a statement here and there you can…
B: Umhm
H: …to see and just to keep yourselves happy and busy and productive and creative.
B: Hm
H: So
B: Sounds really neat {chuckles} Umm, so, let's see, see I off way not even near this {both chuckle} which is totally, which is great, that's how I want us to go…
H: Ok good
B: …just so I just need a moment to kind of check see where I am…
H: Ok, yeah, yeah
B: …umm, oh ok, well le/, how did you start, is is this, could you consider it a career? Or
H: Yeah, I do other things as well, like I do, um, I'm an actor as well, into a/, like I go to auditions for acting jobs…
B: Ok, yeah
H: …and stuff like that a lot and I teach dance to pay my bills.
B: Mm
H: Um, but other than that it's Part of my career, I do this and acting and teaching, so it's definitely part of my career
B: Ok, so you are A performer?
H: Umhm, yeah, I usually tell people I'm an actor and a dancer and then, you know, if ..
B: Yeah
H: …that's just pretty vague but…
B: Yeah, if they're interested…
H: Umhm, yeah, {both chuckle}
B: Ok, um, so you said you've been doing it, um, your whole life, you've been training…
H: Umhm, yup, dancing, dance classes, you know, ballet five days a week through in high school and all that kind of stuff, since I was five.
B: Ok, um, and then you said you started 'All You Can Eat' first

H: Yeah, my friend [male name] and I, Nikki had a similar show she was doing in LA but [male name] and I started it here and ran into Nikki and that's how I got to know her, [male name] already knew her, and then since he moved away we've basically just been, um, carrying it on. So yeah, but that's how it started four years ago, four or five years ago we started
B: Ok
H: And then Nikki and I have just branched out on our own like with Shocore or whatever bands or we've sort of, but we're, yeah…
B: Ok
H: …we've been branching out.
B: Yeah, so they, um you, I think you mentioned that Shocore saw your show, liked what they saw…
H: Umhm
B: …and hired you, is that how it…
H: Yeah, they had hired us, um, a band, [male name] the lead singer of Shocore was in before, they had hired 'All You Can Eat' to Open for them at this one show…
B: Oh, ok
H: …uh, it was DDT, when he was in DDT, {inhales} um, but uh, yeah I mean, Nikki knows [male name], well Sho that his sort of stage name, Sho, he's Shocore…
B: Ok
H: …but um, anyway he…
B: And that's the lead singer or the?
H: No that's, they're the, he produces the music, he was the guitar player.
B: Oh
H: Long black hair [male name]
B: Oh, ok, you, yup
H: Um, they've known each other a long time, so they had a history, but just with mutual friends, m/ um, I'm friends with most of them in the band…
B: Umhm
H: … just through, like, through my boyfriend and whoever {inhales} um and then yeah they really liked 'All You Can Eat' and they wanted to just add more of a stage show to their show…
B: Ok
H: …and so we started working with them from the very beginning when they started, Nikki and I did Every, up until we stopped working with them, we did the, both tours of Canada, we did, um, the videos, All the shows when they were first starting all around here, so, we did, we did all of them
B: So, um, you/, I think y/, sorry, I think you just said that they wanted to make it more of a stage show, what…
H: Umhm
B: …was the goal to bring you in, just to make it more…
H: Umhm…
B: entertaining?
H: …to make it more entertaining. They wanted sort of a, a more, just a visual show, just to be more entertaining, to put on a stage show, um, that's what they wanted from it and they knew that we'd mix well with them…

B: Umhm
H: …they wanted us to suit their feel and just provide entertainment
B: And I think {incoherent} that makes them different than a lot of different bands {both chuckle}
H: Umhm, well…
B: Cause I, I, I was pretty shocked…
H: Yeah
B: …when I, when I and I think, I sort off got that feeling, like I was with a male friend of mine…
H: Umhm
B: …and he was like, you know…
H: Umhm
B: …he was, {Heather chuckles} loved the entertainment…
H: Yeah really {both laughing} yeah
B: …and I was like wow…
H: Yeah
B: …yeah it was really exciting and interest/ cause you, you know, it's like you, you/…
H: Yeah
B: …you're not expecting it at all
H: But you know what, even to touch on that, like since we haven't been doing work with them, I, I've heard, I haven't seen them perform since, but that they've tried to use, bring a couple other girls in and they've brought in Strippers…
B: Yes they have
H: …oh, did you see them?
B: Yes I did
H: And I, I don't know why they did that because we use to always watch other bands that did that and we use to talking about it and they agreed it was lame, like it, I think it Cheapens the act…
B: Umhm
H: …I think if, if they couldn't find something to do what we did they should have gone for a totally different…
B: Umhm
H: …thing, Fire juggling or, ju/, you know…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: uh, I don't know why they're doing that, I don't know if they still are…
B: Yeah, I did see it, yeah, I saw it, um, at the show in March…
H: Umhm
B: …yeah, I saw it at that show and I was, it was, yeah…
H: Umhm, wasn't as good
B: …it was very, yeah I guess this is a really interesting point because there was something very, very, very different…
H: Umhm
B: …between what You did and what, like they came out and in essence, you know, they, they danced around, they like simulated fellatio and like nothing…
H: Oh really
B: …yeah, it wasn't coolest thing Ever…

H: Really
B: …um, yeah, yeah, I don't mean, I sure they're wonderful friends and everything…
H: No, I know
B: …{chuckles} I um, yeah I was just, I was, it was, that's really int/, sorry I never really thought about, but I, I sort of thought that potentially I had had that reaction purely because I had had interaction with you…
H: Yeah
B: …and so I was like, 'Hey, what are they doing there'…
H: Yeah
B: …you know, and so I thought maybe it was just a personal Thing…
H: Yeah
B: …you know, that I had, you know…
H; I don't know, I just don't like it, just to throw something in there just to have it, to try and be sexy or just to throw that feel in, it jus/, I don't think it works and, I mean, I, I never saw it, I, I shouldn't really talk but…
B: Yeah
H: …I've seen it before and just seen strippers…
B: Umhm
H: …it doesn't work, I think it looks cheap and…
B: Why don't you think it works?
H: Because I think unless, I mean this sounds kind of bad, I mean don't wan/, I'm not saying no strippers are talented but just, I just think from strippers I've gone to seen, gone and seen, it's just a different feel, I think they're, like I said, I think they look like Victims. It looks like to me like they're being degraded, if they don't have talent, if they're just up there showing their bodies…
B: Umhm
H: …and trying to look pretty, I don't think that's interesting and I think that's degrading because I don't think they're offering anything and they just look, you know, I don't know, I just think it's it's degrading whereas if you have something you're, you're doing you're portraying an art And being sexy at the same time or have some sort of skill you're demonstrating, Using sex to maybe…
B: Umhm
H: …have that audience enjoy watching it…
B: Umhm
H: …I just think it's different. I don't know some people might think we're degrading what we're doing though, but I just don't see it that way
B: Mm, umhm. Um, so what, this is, kind of may seem like a bizarre question, what do you think, or an obvious question, I don't think I'm stating the obvious, but you know how there's things, any thing's that seem obvious…
H: Umhm
B: …um, why do you think your performances are Sexy?
H: Um, I think different things, part of it is that it's a natural thing to want to, um, express I found as I got older with my dance training once I started going to classes that, once I got to a certain age and I guess I was more sexually matured, the, the routines I did in class, I realized I was portraying them a little sexier using, you know, just things like, using your hips more, just how, I just think it's totally human nature and natural to want

to express that, that just came out naturally for me with my dancing…
B: Umhm
H: …and also because it is true that people enjoy seeing that, it does keep people interested in a nightclub…
B: Umhm
H: …you know that, I think you have to throw in things like that but not, not necessarily just sex but say the confetti and the, or the whip cream and the sex, you know, like, it it is always entertaining.
B: Ok, umm, cause I, when I was describing your show to s/, to people, I always said, um, that it was, it was highly sexual and highly Feminine…
H: Umhm
B: …do you consider it highly Feminine, like I sort of, I thought you were portraying a hyper a hyper…
H: I don't know maybe some of it, some of the, some of the stuff we did but it always kind of shocks me, like with Shocore cause we, we're on tour and doing the same show all the time, you got so comfortable with the choreography and stuff that just, you could just loosen up and so things happen and I mean sometimes it was obviously trying to be very feminine but I think sometimes being on stage or even if we were Moving sexually, I mean that's how I was expressing myself, um, s/, like even just like sticking your tongue out or like just being a little bit harsh would come out and…
B: Mm
H: …you know and I, I don't think some of the things that came out was that feminine {chuckles} like
B: Ok
H: I don't know. I don't think we really purposely Tried to make it really feminine but I guess it did come across that way {unclear word}
B: Would I, would I, sorry, would I or how I got to that…
H: Umhm
B: …I think was specifically the costumes…
H: Umhm
B: …cause they were all really stereotypically, like the catholic schoolgirl…
H: Yeah, yeah, we definitely chose that, yeah
B: …the tutus…
H: Yeah
B: …{both chuckle} no I just, you know, I just wanted to say why I sort of had that idea in my mind…
H: Yeah
B: …and um…
H: Yeah, no that makes sense {Brandy chuckles} but I'm just thinking of things like, at the last number we did and Shocore, um, we fill beer bottles with water and Spit on the audience, I that's not feminine…
B: Umhm
H: …but it was fun and like the crowds loved it…
B: Umhm
H: …it was just such a weird feeling being able to do that, like people going 'yeah, spit on me' {B laughs} It was very, it was very liberating, I mean…

B: Umhm
H: …because I would never do that normally but just being on stage and having that it, it's totally just you can express yourself that way…
B: Umhm
H: …it's fun, it's like therapy and it's fun to be able to do that and people enjoy it
B: Umhm, so how different would you say, like do you have a specific, if I, I'm not really sure what I'm, well we'll see what we can get out of here…
H: umhm
B: …just cause I'm, I'm not really sure what I want to say exactly, um…
H: Yeah
B: …do you feel that there's a different, um, do you view your sexuality, and and maybe your gender identity, differently on the stage than you do, let's say, today sitting here
H: Yeah
B: …hanging out with your boyfriend, just relaxing?
H: Yeah…
B: Yeah?
H: …I do definitely. I don't know maybe it's because I get that out on stage…
B: Umhm
H: …but I don't feel a need in my life to be extra flamboyant, like I see how Nikki is in real life, we're good friends, but it's totally different than how I am cause she'll be…
B: Ok
H: …flashing her boobs {both chuckle} and stuff like that and I just, I don't, maybe it's because, maybe I would be more like that if I didn't do the show, I don't know…
B: Umhm
H: …but I feel maybe because I get it out on stage but I don't, I don't feel the need to push my sexuality like I do on stage…
B: Umhm
H: …or to be harsh, or attention-getting all the time, it's just doesn't, it's not me in normal life, it's definitely stuff that comes out and like I was saying, us accommodating what show we're doing, like Shocore's a crazy rock show and they wanted the sexy, crazy feel…
B: Umhm
H: …and so I go with that, I , I identify with it, definitely…
B: Umhm
H: …and I enjoy it but I don't feel that it's, um, it's a direct reflection of me in normal life at all…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …Parts of it, I mean obviously, or I wouldn't be doing it {Brandy chuckles} but um, no I don't, I feel very different on stage
B: Ok, um, yo/, I, you've sort of, you've expanded a lot, is there, can you say how you feel different, like do you feel more sexual…
H: Umhm
B: …more or less feminine or?
H: Probably more, may it's just tapping in in to into feelings but um it's definitely more sexual. You feel like you've just control, like, it feels good because you can do whatever you want, you can express yourself and people are actually interested in what you're

expressing…
B: Umhm
H: …um, and it's fun to be sexual like that and yeah, it's definitely um, definitely more sexual and it's just yeah, it's very liberating when you get to the point where you can, you know, where you can go down to pasties and you Don't care, like I don't, my thought before I take my shirt off isn't 'Oh, am I going to look ok?' I don't Care, like, who thinks I look good or not…
B: Umhm
H: …it's liberating in that sense that that I can do all these things, it's fun
B: Um, so, um so, it is definitely a more sexual feeling…
H: Umhm
B: …like you you indentify more closely…
H: Umhm
B: …with this sense of sexuality on the stage…
H: Ya
B: …is that linked, um, see maybe I'm going wrong here because you do not identify it as, sor/, if I may…
H: Umhm
B: …I'm just reiterating what I'm hearing, umm, you don't identify it as highly feminine it's sort um a mix of…
H: Umm, I guess it is, I don't know…
B: …I don't really, I, I…
H: No, no I know…
B: …umhm {chuckles}
H: …I mean it is but I just thinking not the typical bl/, like I didn't realize, like you identifying the costumes and stuff like that…
B: Umhm
H: …that Is…
B: Umhm
H: …but I 'm just saying some feelings I've had up there on stage is feminine but sometime I feel total testosterone and 'rah' and spitting and {tongue out} and that in that sense is not ultra-feminine in my opinion
B: So it beyond…
H: Yeah
B: …the feminine? Ok
H: I mean, I still think that can be sexy to some people and that can be, you know, appealing and stuff, I just…
B: What the high femininity or the testosterone?
H: …the testosterone
B: Ok, yeah, yeah
H: But I, I don't know, I just, I don't personally identify it as just trying, going after a goal of being ultra feminine.
B: Yeah
H: It's just how we are feminine…
B: Umhm
H: …and we, and that's just how it's coming across

B: So if I, if I may, the starting base is sort of this sense of femininity and then it sort of takes off from there? Is that?
H: Umhm, yeah, yeah, it incorporates it all…
B: Because, you know what, I have to say I didn't, um, I didn't really, I see exactly what you're saying about the spitting and the, I didn't really identify that at the time, the first time I watching it…
H: Umhm
B: …you know, certainly I'd love to see it, you know, fifty times, you know…
H: Yeah
B: …so you and then you can get the nuances of it, like, but you, you can, of course, are better able to enlighten, you know…
H: Yeah
B: …like you can tell me what's there…
H: I just think in that sense we weren't going for an ultra feminine thing or we wouldn't be spitting, we wouldn't be {tongue out}, we'd be trying to suit the cliché of what people think of as female, of just dancing around, you know, shaking our bums {Brandy chuckles}, and you know like and just trying to look super pretty. We Weren't, I mean by the end of the show we looked gross {Brandy chuckles}, our makeup was everywhere, we were soaking wet, like totally sweaty and snot on our faces and like {Brandy chuckles}, you know, in that sense, I don't think we were trying to be ultra feminine or we wouldn't have done that, we were just trying to be able to do whatever we wanted to do and not worry about the cliché of what girls are suppose to look like and do…
B: Umhm
H: …and that's what Shocore liked about us too, is they didn't want the, well I don't know why they're {B chuchkles}…
B: They apparently…
H: …yeah, but they always said 'We don't want the perfect role model girls. You guys are great with what you do and, you know that's, it's just, you know, it it's different. It's something different, it's not the cliché of what girl dancers are suppose to be doing up there so'. So, {pause} yeah.
B: No, it's really exciting…
H: Umhm
B: …so it it's, it's great, you know, I, you know, you don't want, like, yeah no, it's really exciting, like, like you said, these aren't things that I picked up about it…
H: Umhm
B: …you know, not that I am the most observant person in the world…
H: Umhm
B: …but, you know, it it's, I'm very glad that you're telling me all these things
H: Good, good
B: Um, so let's see, good, totally not even…
H: Ok
B: …but this is awesome, this is really going great…
H: Ok
B: …I'm happy, good {Brandy chuckles}
H: Good
B: Ummmm, let's see, ummmm, hm hmm, ok we've sort of touched on this, I had sort of,

and this is really, um, all I have is sort of a guide as to what sorts of things I want to talk about…
H: Umhm
B: …umm, I, I'm curious as to how you see your por/ performances as specifically gendered, um, is the sense that how do you think, uh, like, one why of putting into is could two men do this? Umm, how would people receive it differently?
H: They could but just think of a of a normal audience in, well it depends what situation, in 'All You Can Eat' we do use guys…
B: Umhm
H: …and it is taken upon as fine, you know, sometimes we'll make it so if it is a straight club we make sure the guys aren't getting it on on stage, you know, {Brandy chuckles} that kind of thing, but if it is a gay club we know they want to see that interaction with the guys…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …you know, whether it's, you know, just very tame or not…
B: Umhm
H: …but, um, but for example Shocore, I don't think it could have worked, what we did with the guys because it was such a huge male audience…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …and that's just how it is. It was a rock show. We know the audience it was and they wouldn't want to see guys…
B: Umhm
H: …I'm not saying that's right or wrong but I'm saying you just have to think of what the audience wants…
B: Umhm, umhm, umhm. Umm, so how, you said of course, um, your show is going to be planned really differently if you're in like a a queer context of let's say a gay club or…
H: Umhm
B: …something like that versus, uhh, see I would consider, personally, um, I would consider, uh, the the Shocore, as an example uh performance as very heterosexually driven…
H: Umhm
B: …in the sense that it's, majori/, the majority of your audience is heterosexual males, which is of course a presumption of my own…
H: No, yeah
B: …but that's the feeling I got.
H: Yes, definitely
B: So how did those two, um, di/ is the feeling different? Is is there something, is there something inherently a little more, uh uh, queer or sub/ like a/ about your performance when you performing to a gay audience or no?
H: Umm, you mean just context wise or you're talking feeling like?
B: Yeah, I think I'm I I I'm how do you feel about it? Do you feel different performing in in a guy club or or ?
H: Uhmmm, I don't really feel different, like I don't think it changes My performance at all, I don't think it changes, like, I don't pre-plan how I'm gonna act on stage…
B: Umhm
H: …it just goes from number to number, it depends on the number we're doing, but it

just basically the big difference is the pre-production, the planning before the show that's different…
B: Umhm
H: …the numbers we choose, umm, really things the energy level, the sexuality level, it's the same, it's, I don't think that changes…
B: Yeah
H: …for me personally anyway.
B: Hm, and, um, ok then we get to a super super super important, um, issue of reception.
H: Umhm
B: Uhh, ok let's specifically start with a Shocore type performance…
H: Umhm
B: …how do you fee/, what's your, um, uh, how do you feel about how people are receiving your performances?
H: With Shocore, um, I enjoyed it, it was definitely a predominantly heterosexual male thing and there was the odd time they're just be losers spitting drinks on us or whatever, but in general the audience definitely enjoyed it and their energy went up…
B: Umhm
H: …and it wasn't too bad because like when, if Nikki and I went and did, sold merchandise after, which we had to when we were on tours with them, um, I found a lot the guys would were to scared to come and bug us because we didn't come across as Idiots…
B: Uhm, ok, yeah
H: …we came across as strong and so, I mean we'd get the odd guy coming and talking to us, but generally it was all right because, you know, they were, they seemed like a little scared of us or something {chuckles}
B: No I, I, I get what you're saying cause if, if , yeah, it is a…
H: But it is, I mean it's definitely a different reception, like I don't think a ch., like say I'm dancing for a gay crowd or the Shoco/ Shocore…
B: Umhm
H: …crowd, I don't think it changes how I feel on stage or how sexual I feel on stage, I think I'm the same for both but it's definitely a different reception, you get the Shocore crowd, you know they're they're getting into it in that sense but it doesn't effect how, how I perform cause I'm just expressing myself, you know, I'm not, it doesn't bother me if the audience doesn't get Turned on by me or whatever, you know, like, it's just, that doesn't, it doesn't change my performance.
B: So it seems, just form what you said, it it it's it seems very much more about you than about the audience
H: Yeah, yeah, I mean, like I said it pre-production and planning stuff, um, th/ I consider, depending on the audience, but once I'm on stage it doesn't matter, it's, I mean, I don't want to say I get into my own world because yo/ yo/ obviously you have to be receptive and open to the crowd…
B: Umhm
H: …but it not, it's not really about, I'm not worried about what the audience is thinking anyway when I'm on stage
B: Umhm, um, as I was saying, I'm I'm not, you know, I'm I'm not creatively inclined at all and I'm not a performer {chuckles} and…

H: Umhm
B: so that's really neat that idea of of being Receptive to the crowd, how, like how does that work, can you feel when something isn't working or?
H: Yeah, oh yeah, u/ well definitely, I don't think, I mean if you're a good performer you just keep going anyway, right, and I mean that that, or not that show, the show I was telling you about, that I'm going to send you pictures from, there's this Tiny stage, there's five of us dancing, four feet deep, ten feet wide, {Brandy chuckles} we're outside, she didn't tell us that we're suppose to be facing in these windows and the audience was inside so we're facing out and no one's out there, it was just ridiculous, like it was a joke, and people were amazed that we didn't just walk off and we, but we just kept and dancing and we started, switched our focus and started facing in and then some of us had too dance on the sidewalk but we did the whole show…
B: Hmm
H: …anyways. So, {Brandy chuckles}, but yeah that was just my point is, I mean, but you definitely feel the energy, like if we do crowd were people are totally cheering and like 'whoa'…
B: Yeah
H: …definitely makes you feel better and makes you go more, but if they don't do it you just have to try and do it anyway on your own energy and then just, whatev/, hope for the best. {Brandy chuckles}
B: Umm, so have you had an experience, I'm just thinking, is there, do you think con/ conceptually could there ever be a point or have you ever experienced a point where sexuality wise too much is, there's a point where there's too much, does that make any sense? I, what I think of…
H: Have I ever thought it was too much what we were doing?
B: Yeah or felt that the audience was like, 'woa, woa, woa, this is too much'?
H: Not really sexuality wise, we did a number once were we were smashing pumpkin at a Halloween show and people were, it was the wrong crowd and I think people were probably high on drugs or something and it was that kind of crowd, it was a big Halloween party and so I think that {chuckles} kind of affected the audience but anyway, they weren't, they weren't, they were like 'Oh my god, what are you guys doing?' but, I don't know, I find people get a ki/, when we do things that are extreme on stage, like this I would never do normally in my normal life, I'm, I think I'm almost numb to it now, like I, I, things do Not bother me at all and I think when you do those things on stage, the biggest reaction I get is people just laughing, like, 'Oh my god, I can't believe they're doing that', you know, I, I've never really gotten the reaction of 'Oh that's terrible' or {Brandy chuckles}, you know, I usually get that reaction of just people laughing
B: So an/, so people are, you're saying, like let's use the spitting, the, the…
H: Umhm
B: …masc/ the stereotypically masculine or not passive, yeah, behavior…
H: Yeah, yeha
B: …umm, uh, people really like that? They dig that?
H: Yeah!
B: They're, yeah.
H: Yeah, I'm, it obviously depends on the crowd too, if we're in a night club or a concert atmosphere, where people are relaxed and having drinks, I'm sure that helps but I've

never had, I mean just the odd experience of say the odd girl that really dressed up and doesn't want me us to get her to/ wet or whatever with the water gun…
B: Oh, ok
H: …she, you know that's the only bad reaction we've had but in general people just get all excited and 'Whoa, yeah!' {chuckles}
B: And do you think that's, do you think that's, um, just because they like to see, is is it just a just the the the shocking {inaudible words}…
H: I think they just like to feel all crazy, they like to think that they're involved for one thing in what we're doing…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …and they just like to, they think they're letting loose and being all crazy and I think {both chuckle} people could get into that, they like that feeling
B: Umhm, I just think the the issue of reception, I'm I'm really, I'm just thinking if there's other things I want, I just think it's so, because what you put out, um, in the sense of like, you you you mentioned earlier that, um, uh, maybe some people don't see, maybe they see it as totally Degrading…
H: Umhm
B: …and totally awful…
H: UmHm
B: …so, I I think (reception) is just such an interesting (issue) because ah, you could take any number of um, uh, views of your performances…
H: Umhm
B: …can you, can you talk anymore…
H: Right! {inaudible word} And think what we did with Shocore was a little bit more uh, ob/ obviously geared to the heterosexual male so I could see why some people would be offended but I just ,I mean I just think people have to relax, who ca/, you know, I don't, I only think it's wrong if you're degrading yourself…
B: Umhm
H: …and if it's coming across that way and if you're feeling bad about what you're doing but…
B: Umhm
H: …otherwise people just have to Relax and I, I don't know, I think sometimes, I mean I might be wrong but a lot of times, I mean, I don't feel we got any bad, a lot of bad, response, but say the odd dirty look you'd get from a girlfriend, I think they would just be jealous that their boyfriend was (attracted) to us or whatever and I think I just think people have to relax a little more, I don't think it's a big deal, but I'm sure there people are that, I'm sure that there are people that don't agree with what we're doing, but I mean, I think, I don't know, like I was always scared for my parents to come see the show, I thought, to see the Shocore show, I thought, I didn't want them to see it because she's total nice beaver-cleaver tame mom, like doesn't know what a brothel is, she, you know like, she's {Brandy chuckles} just, anyway she, um, she ca/, she was in Victoria with my dad and um they showed up at the show, my boyfriend didn't tell me, thank god, before the show because I would have been totally scared on stage…
B: Umhm
H: …um, anyway, they hung out with uh my boyfriend's parents and and all of our friends and stuff and they saw the show and my mom loved it, like she gave me a big and

just she told me to just relax, like she thought we were so great on stage and, I mean, I know there's things, like now she just makes jokes about getting me bigger pasties and stuff like that {Brandy chuckles} but and my dad, my dad was like 'I always thought she'd do something different' you know, like they just, they really they embraced it, they enjoyed it and I thought they would hate it.
B: So do you think that has anything to do with the, you were talking earlier that it's just natural, like it's just natural to express a certain amount…
H: umhm
B: …of sexuality, and in that particular arena…
H: Yeah…
B: …it's, you know, it's…
H: I just think the way we do it, for me, my opinion is that we pull it off with the way we do it, with the energy level, that it's fun, that's it's free spirited, it's the attitude of who cares and being sexy at the same time and, personally, I think that's why it works.
B: Umhm, 'kay, that's really cool. Um, how, as a dancer, um, and as a trained dancer, there, um, I'd really, again, you know, I'm totally not a performer, so I I I'm just really kind of, just asking, hoping you'll enlighten me here…
H: Yeah
B: …um, is is there, I understand that you experience, do you, do you think you experience you body very differently when you're performing?
H: Umhm
B: How?
H: Definitely it's an expression thing, you feel like, that's why I love dancing because I feel like, once, like I got to a certain age with my dancing that I felt mature with it and I wasn't so, um, small movement wise, like when I reached sixteen, seventeen, I actually started feeling like I was moving and actually using my dance as a expression…
B: Umhm
H: …I definitely feel like, um, {pause} lost my train of thought, where was it, when did you tal/, it was the expression thing right?
B: Yeah, yeah and sort of maturing into it, um,
H: Yeah
B: Ok, maybe we'll jump back into, just think totally know
H: Oh, but I definitely feel like I'm expressing myself on stage with, like with, with dancing.
B: Ok
H: I feel like, um, like I said before I mentioned the therapy thing, it definitely feels like I can get out my frustrations or, you know, my anxieties, my anger, my sadness, my whatever, it's definitely therapeutic that way because it's, for me, I like being physical and active and so I'm being physical and exercising and I'm being artistic and expressing myself.
B: That's very neat, it sounds very therapeutic {Brandy chuckles} Um, do you, um, comfort wise, are you more comfortable with your body when you're performing or would you say it's fairly similar?
H: Umhm, no I more, I think.
B: Yeah?
H: Yeah because I feel like it's not, I mean I feel like it's me up there, but I feel like I can

do anything I want to do, I feel like I'm not necessarily reflecting my, I was going to say my points of view but um, I just feel I'm more at liberty to even, you know, experience things I wouldn't normally experience. It's just more of a freedom
B: Ok, this is totally going to seem like it's coming out of the blue, I just thought of it, you know…
H: Umhm
B: …um, you said, so when you're like let's say at a gay club you have guys and is there, like do you, do you have like bisexual performances or do the girls is there also sort of, like I'm, I'm just curious, like cause you said…
H: In the audience?
B: Uh, no in the performance, you said you identified as heterosexual…
H: Umhm
B: Do you perform as non-heterosexual?
H: Oh yeah
B: Yeah, ok, no, I was just curious
H: No I mean like even with Shocore like me and Nikki, again I don't know what you noticed of that, but there would be the odd little interaction where we pretend to be having sex with each other but…
B: Yeah
H: …I think that's just for a rise, I mean, it's just for whatever but, um, and it's not for a reason, like we don't necessarily, I guess if we're doing a gay crowd we don't necessarily choose to show that some of us are gay or show girl and girl or guy and guy it's just if that comes about in the show, whereas we would just sensor it quicker for a straight crowd. {Brandy chuckles} You know what I mean, we would specifically choose not to do it but, um, yeah we don't plan it either way we just, we obviously have fun with sexuality and on stage yeah I've portrayed it that way before…
B: Umhm
H: …of of homosexuality but yeah
B: So I'm thinking, um, oh yeah, ok, ok, so let's say when there are interactions, you know that may be, you know, even hint at het/, homosexuality, things like that…
H: Umhm
B: …um, is that, is it, does it feel different for, let's say, the Shocore crowd because I'm thinking you have a bunch of, you know…
H: Umhm
B: …if you want to be, you know, I I don't know what…
H: Horny guys?
B: …yeah! A bunch of horny young guys, you know, is that very different cause you know that's like the big {both speaking inaudible}
H: Oh yeah, but that just makes me laugh, I think it's ridiculous, I think it's so stupid but they they just get such a kick out of that cause I just think it's, I don't know, it 's just stupid but yeah it was funny like the whip cream, did you see that? Did we do that? There was a couple show didn't do the whip cream. When we went done to pasties, me and Nikki spit whip cream on each other, I think that's hilarious, I think it such a cliché, it's totally just, it's just such a cliché of the whip cream and the two girls…
B: Ok
H: …but I just think it's funny and so we kinda change it up a bit, cause wha/ it only

lasted a few seconds and then we go off stage but we start doing it where I put it in my mouth and then I pretended I was gonna throw up and then do it and you know that's not the typical cliché, so I thought that was funny to do that because, I don't, they did get such a kick out of that, I think it's just, that's just, yeah the typical horny guy thing. I think it's kinda stupid but it's funny.

B: So how do people, would you do that the same sort of thing with, like in a gay club?

H: Yes

B: Yes and how, how?

H: They actually do tha/ , the gay crowd, like the gay males likes that, they love seeing sexy females and stuff, I think they just identify with them and…

B: Umhm

H: …I mean, we definitely don't inhibit the female sex part of it in a gay club, they like seeing that too.

B: Is it predominantly gay men or?

H: Yeah, it is.

B: Okay

H: Umm, predominantly and it's still straight people in the crowd too…

B: Umhm, umhm

H: …but, I mean, we just, we do perform in that venue a lot because there's, um, one guy, she's a drag queen in town that hire's us all the time and puts on these great shows, which is, which is why I'm making the reference a lot because that's why we do a lot of gay shows because they've sort of taken to our show and enjoy it so we do it a lot in in the area but…

B: Umhm, um, can you think of why they've taken to your show, maybe more than?

H: I think because they, they've sort of been inhibited their lives, I mean, I don't know what it's like to be gay but I'm sure it's hard to come out and stuff like that and they probably feel like they're put down more so, it's probably harder for them to live their lives normally and I think our show just sort of blows the boundaries type thing and they identify with that and like seeing that, they're just sort, makes them happy because that's how they want to live their lives more…

B: Umhm, umhm

H: …I'd say so and maybe the, just cause they, they live their lives differently, they're more, they're more apt to like different things like that…

B: Umhm, um, so you said it's, it's, uh , if I can just, you said something about sort of blowing the boundaries, so you would…

H: Umhm

B: …so you would, you would argue that your performance does blow boundaries, I'm I'm…

H: Umhm

B: … thinking specifically here of gender boundaries…

H: Umhm

B: …you know, there's…

Side One of Tape Ends (Original Copy)

B: …talking about blowing boundaries, specifically gender, how do you see your

performances as doing that?
H: Well, different things, like I was saying before with the say with the Shocore idea is we're blowing boundaries cause I don't think, um, like with the spitting and all that, that's not typically feminine, that's not what we think is suppose to be sexy for a girl to do and stuff like that but so that's why I think we're blowing boundaries, in that way and just, um, even body image and stuff, like we're not perfect barbies up there…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …and that, that's ok too. I mean, we shouldn't be, we don't have to be to be doing what we're doing, I don't think…
B: Umhm
H: …so that blows, that's boundaries changing. And with 'All You Can Eat', I mean, just, um, not even just sexuality but other issues, like, we're just, you know, crossing the boundaries a little more than what normally is done…
B: Umhm
H: …yeah
B: Is that a a goal of your performance art, err, it is?
H: I guess in a way because we know that that works and that's sort of what the show is about but it's basically, we're not trying to be different, we're not trying to be, it's just how we have fun, how we express ourselves and that's just what comes out, we don't sit down and go, 'ok, what would really shock an audience?' Like we just, you know, obviously we have to keep in mind what's entertaining, what do people want to see but there's no purpose thing where we're trying to be, we're gonna try and be sexy, that's just what comes out, you know
B: Ok, hm, that's really neat. It very cool {both chuckle} Um, let's see, what el/, what do we have here, um, oh this is clearly, I think, just repeating the obvious, so you definitely do not intend, by any means, to reinforce an idealistic feminine issue, that's highly sexual…
H: No
B: OK
H: No, I mean, that comes out cause we are females and we are feminine but that, it's just because that's how we are, we're not pushing anything, I don't think…
B: Umhm
H: …I don't feel we are.
B: Did you see, um, does that reflect in your in your per/, not personal, but your everyday life, uh, uh do you think, does it cross over at all to how you view let's say gender relations, um, how you are with your partner?
H: Um, how do you mean, like if?
B: I'm just thinking, um, like you have an opportunity that I think a lot of us don't have…
H: Umhm
B: …this opportunity to, um, push the boundaries…
H: Umhm
B: …see what's out there, you know…
H: Umhm
B: …and I I was just thinking that, um?
H: Does that come out, does that effect in my life?

B: Yeah, may/ yeah
H: Um, I think it's the fact that, in the way that I'm more relaxed with things, I don't think I was uptight before, but things don't shock me as much, um, I don't know, maybe that's just me getting older too but just my views of sexuality, I guess it has made me more relaxed with things, but I also find for me personally, um, a far as sexuality goes, I don't think it should be, like I was saying about the whole stripper thing, that I think there's a difference between what we're doing. I don't have a problem with strippers but I don't necessarily ag/, I wouldn't, I wouldn't strip…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …you know, that would of/, uh, that would be degrading to me because, I don't know, I don't know how it's affected my life, my everyday life. I, it has made me more relaxed but, I don't know, I'm just trying to think about it…
B: No, no take your time, take your time.
H: …yeah. I don't know.
B: Like, let's say, um, just let me think of an example, um, you know, um, in your relationships, are they…
H: Umhm
B: …uh, a lot of rel/, or some relationships are very bound by traditional…
H: Umhm
B: …view of what women do what men do, um…
H: Umhm
B: …how they should interact, do you think that that, um, that, uh, are you, uh, {Brandy chuckles} blah, bla, blah {both chuckle} Don't mind me. {both chuckle} Um, do you think that you are as constrained, equally constrained, not constrained at all by those traditional views or?
H: I don't think I'm constrained at all but I think that's just my personality, I don't think it's the show reflection, because I don't feel I am the same, same as I am on stage…
B: Ok, ok
H: …but I think that's just my views personally, it's just not being a totally traditional kind of girl.
B: Umhm
H: But don't think the show's made me that way, think it's the other way around, that I've made the show that way because of my views…
B: Umhm, that makes sense , yeah, for sure, for sure
H: Yeah
B: So how long have you been doing this, I'm really just curious?
H: This whole schtick thing?
B: Yeah
H: The, um, well four years ago we started 'All You Can Eat'. Um, I've been dancing and doing other professional work with dancing and stuff, um, before that like forever, I'm, I just turned twenty-five, but um, we've been doing this for four years. I , and Nikki and I, Shocore was the first time we branched out into live music…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …so I don't know how long that was ago, two years ago, I guess…
B: Yeah
H: …was it that long ago?

B: Mmm
H: We worked with them for about a year.
B: Um, let's see, oh ok here's an interesting, um, we were talking sort of, you know, about the what the performances mean to you, um, your intentions with them, um, has that changed over time
H: Umm, has our intentions changed over time?
B: Yeah or yeah, ju/, how you see yourself as a performer?
H: Yeah, definitely, when I first, yeah it's definitely changed, when I first started, I'm just more relaxed and it's also because we've explored so many different scenes, ideas, we've definitely grown, I feel I've definitely grown as a performer and always am, but um, yeah, it it was just, things were tamer, things weren't as, um, in-depth as…
B: Ok
H: …as, uh, as they are now, or, uh, yeah, there was, it was definitely tamer at the beginning but, yeah, we (have) really grown…
B: Do you think it was…
H: …and together…
B: Umhm
H: …Nikki and I have worked a lot, um, choreographing together, now we work, you know it's easier working together, the choreographer comes out, choreography comes out faster, we have so many ideas in a repertoire that we've used that we can just pull things out of a hat…
B: Umhm
H: …and, you know, when we want to just recycle things, we do, so it's changed in that way
B: Was it, do you think, more, um, ah, I'm just thinking, uh, less boundary-crossing, in the, is that what you meant by 'things use to be more tame'?
H: Umm, yeah.
B: Yeah?
H: I mean, it's still, it still was pretty crazy but just not as as much. Yeah. We've definitely pushed our limits a little more and more as times gone on and it's to keep it exciting too. It get's boring if you do the same thing all the time.
B: Hm, sounds very exciting anyways. {chuckles} Um, you were saying, you talked about not being that perfect Barbie…
H: Umhm
B: …figure up there, um and I , again, I don't really know a huge amount about it, um…
H: Umhm
B: I've read certain things, specifically in regards to Madonna
H: Umhm
B: …um, about a very much, a need, like a narcissism almost, that you feed off of that, that, the attention and the…
H: Umhm
B: …the validation, but it doesn't seem like that really applies here.
H: No, I mean, I mean, I feel I have to be fit just to be able to pull off what I'm doing {Brandy chuckles}, but I'm I wasn't born with the perfect body and perfect metabolism but I don't, I mean, I just don't let it hold me back, I guess…
B: Umhm, umhm

H: I think it is important to be attractive but I think for me, the, the way I dance, if I dance sexy or if I'm, you know, the way I portray myself and carry myself, I can pull it off and be perceived as sexy and it doesn't necessarily make a difference how my body, like if I see a girl with a perfect body up there and she, she's not carrying herself well, doesn't look confident, doesn't, isn't really doing anything, I don't think she's sexy, you know…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …in that sense, that's why I'm just not too concerned about my, the way my body is being, you know…
B: Umhm
H: …perceived, is because I feel I can pull it off in other ways
B: {inaudible comment} I don't know why I need to keep interjection my own thoughts {Heather chuckles}, but don't mind me. Ohhh. Um, let's see, oh, ok, this is kind of interesting, I was sort of, kind of briefly touched on this…
H: Umhm
B: …um, has there even been a, see now I don't know if this applies in this case, a lot of, oh but see performance, sorry, I'm just working this out in my own mind, but for if, since you consider yourself a performance artist it is about something that you get about it, you're not just, it's not just a job…
H: Umhm
B: …whereas some dancers…
H: Yeah
B: … 'well its just a job', you know, 'I get paid to
H: Yeah
B: …entertain and turn these people on…
H: Yeah
B: …and that's it'
H: and I've done those jobs, I mean, not even just say stripping or whatever, but I haven't done stripping but…
B: Umhm
H: …dancing, I did uh, the PNE, the big fair, I was in this stupid parade, and like it wasn't, you know, it didn't do anything for me artistically but it was a job and I did it…
B: Yeah, yup, yeah. So this is very different then…
H: Umhm
B: …what you do, whether it be with Shocore or 'All You Can Eat'?
H: Yeah
B: Ok
H: Oh yeah definitely…
B: Ok
H: …we do it cause we love to do it, and I love to do it and it uh, it's rewarding and it's fun. We don't make much money off it, I mean especially cause we're the ones putting it on. We have to pay the other dancers a bit, and they don't even get much, you know, we're given them fifty bucks each, we're spending, you know, some money on props and, um, we nev/, cause we put money into it, we don't, we never, I mean we make hardly anything, you know
B: Umm, {murmuring} has, so is it, um, so it's an expression of yourself and it is sexual

expression of yourself, it something that it's different than your sexuality as experienced in everyday life?
H: I think it's part, part of it is how I feel personally and part of it is just exploring other things, um, I don't know, like it's, um, part of it, part of what we do is a reflection of how I feel but part of it is just being entertaining, part of it is doing this to make people shocked, part of it, you know, I realize there's a goal there, it's not, it can't just be about me, there is an audience there and I have to realize what they want they want to see at the same time it's just expressing myself…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …so
B: Mm, um, ok, uh, so you sort of um, I I've just been picking up how you, um, you view your own, you know, you said 'I', you know, you are a woman and, um, your idea of femininity is, is potentially not based in, I I don't mean to, uh, this is what I'm understanding…
H: Ok
B: I don't mean to feed…
H: Ok
B: …and words into yo/ or anything. Um, it seems like it, it's more about, you know, confidence and…
H: Umhm
B: …ability, you know, rather than, um, looks…
H: Umhm, that's just what I respect more, I think it's respectable. I think, yeah, it's much more um, interesting to see a skill or to see something that people have put time and effort and work into and talent and not just acquired from their parents {chuckles}, you know what I mean? Like…
B: Umhm, umhm.
H: …that seems, just to me that's more interesting, it's more respectable because they put effort into it.
B: So, I, I um, I'm thinking here specifically, um, in your views of um, sor/, more of the everyday world, I , I think is sort of what I 'm interested in…
H: Ok
B: …yeah. Cause I'm thinking does, what, again this may be a totally obvious question, but what for you does it mean to be a woman?
H: Um, I think it's so many different things…
B: Umhm
H: …I think it's different for everyone and I don't think anything is right or wrong, so it's just how you feel but, I don't know, I don't define myself in any way really, I don't, I don't try and be a certain way, I don't think. Um, I don't, I'm pretty, um, relaxed kind of person, I just kinda go with the flow {both chuckle} and I don't, I don't know, I don't perceive myself in any particular mold or way.
B: Umhm, no that's totally cool, like I, yeah, I've…
H: I do think females though project their sexuality a lot more, I mean that's just a given in society, that's you know…
B: Mm
H: …that's, I think, I think it comes out with females more…
B: Umhm

H: …um, like for me and my dancing when I said it turned out a little, turned more sexual as I got older, I didn't plan that and I don't thing it was put upon me by society, it's just feeling that I wanted to express, maybe it's just cause women express their emotions and feeling better {pause} but I think, yeah, I think women do that more.
B: So you, would you think, um, is it a natural, are they natural or would you lean more towards the they just are more expressive of various feeling or have been taught to be more expressive?
H: I guess both and it's just how it, how it comes out and probably the roles in society cause men are suppose to be the strong ones and it's not as, um, it's, people don't perceive it as strong to shake your hips around and stuff like that but {Brandy chuckles} but um, yeah I think maybe it is just naturally that that's why women are just more expressive, maybe their just in tune more with their sexuality.
B: Umhm, so do you think there is something, um, that, I I, just youknow, people have different views, there's, you know, there's diff/, there's the view that there's something natural and inherent about whether it be gender or sex, um, whereas some people think 'oh, well, it's more that society's sort of did this'…
H: I mean it's both, it's definitely both, I mean cause like I was saying even though we get a lot out of it up there, the audience has definitely molded our show…
B: Umhm, umhm
H: …so in that case it society and that's, um, it's pushed upon us but I think we don't, I don't know, the stuff that just comes out is just naturally there for us, so I think it's both.
B: Yeah, cool. Ummm, let's see. So we talked about that, um, do people, do you think people sort of off stage…
H: umhm
B: …um, this is sort of, I kind of had it set up as to like, you know, how you sort of experience sexuality and gender and that on stage…
H: Umhm
B: …and then how you experience it off stage, so yeah, I want to focus specifically on, uh, off stage feelings. Um, do you think that people's knowledge of you as a performance artist…
H: Umhm
B: …um, do you think that it effects what they expect of you or, uh, like how they experience you?
H: I think probably effects how they perceive me, I , I mean the people that know me, it obviously doesn't, that know me really well, but…
B: Umhm
H: …I've had the experience of, um, people that I just meet, say after a show, that saw the show and after and they just say 'Oh, I can't, I can't believe that was you up there, you look so different now' or cause I'm not wearing all the make up and portraying myself that way, so they, it probably effect how they perceive me, in that sense, then cause, yeah, people just being shocked that know me and then saw, went and saw the show and said 'I can't believe that was you', you know, it's very different but, but I don't know if it's, if that's good or bad or how it, you know, I don't know what they're thinking but I don't really care really {both chuckle}. I don't but…
B: So, how, I'm just interested, so you've sort of said that the on stage you and the off stage is very different…

H: Umhm
B: …is that, like I know we sort of kind of talked this, how do you see them as different?
H: Um, it's just I mean, it's obviously still me or I wouldn't be doing it you know, no one's telling me what to do up there, but I just don't feel the need to be sp extravagant I normal life, I don't feel the need to be the center of attention that way, um, but I obviously have that in my personality or I wouldn't enjoy being up there, you know…
B: umhm
H: …um, I don't know, it's just a freedom of being up there that's different and exploring things and knowing what the audience like and um, it's definitely very different.
B: Yeah, I'm sure {chuckles} Um, let's see, is there, what about the ex/, is there anything that I'm Missing that I'm not asking about, in the sense, that like, if you were to have five minutes or ten minutes or five hours or whatever…
H: Umhm
B: …to tell someone about your performance art
H: Umhm
B: …what would that be?
H: That we haven't talked about?
B: Yeah, yeah and maybe you know, maybe I'm just so smart I figured it all out {both laugh}
H: Yeah, no {Brandy says something inaudible} covered a lot of it, we, we've covered a lot of my points of view on it, I also, I mean, I don't know what else, um, one thing that I wish people would acknowledge more is that, uh, that it it's a skill that we've acquired. We get a lot of people saying, 'Oh, I I took ballet when I was six, I'd love to be in your show' or, you know what I mean and I feel like it's just, because everyone dances, what where ever, you know at a nightclub or what ever, I find that sometimes I would like to be appreciated more for the time and effort I put into learning the skill. Like I would never go, even though I know how to swim, I would never go offer to be on some swim team cause it sort, it's insult/, it's an insult to them because they've spent so much time and effort and I think sometimes we get, um, people, everyone just thinks they can do it or we've been hired for to choreograph, um, you know, people that are singing and they want have some dance steps and then they're like 'just make it as hard as you guys do your stuff, you know, we can do it'. Cause we make it look easy, you know…
B: Umhm
H: …and so we go and try to teach it and they can, they can't learn it, you know {Brandy chuckles}. I'm just saying, I guess, that sometimes I wish that it was perceived with a little bit more respect in certain, by certain people, not everyone at all, but you know, um, like the odd guy at Shocore that would come up after the show and go, like one, one guy came up and was like 'so do you guys actually like practice ahead of time and choreograph' and I was like 'no, we just look at each other on stage and mimic each other' {Brandy laughing} you know? And I don't know if that's just silly guys, but some people don't perceive it the way it should be and I guess that, that's my only complaint.
B: Umhm, so I'm…
H: Yeah
B: …sorry…
H: No, no that's it, you go
B: Um, I was just thinking, um, about…

H: I know
B: ...um, it's always so hard to keep it in your mind cause I'm listening, you know, but you're like, in one moment you have a thought...
H: Yeah
B: This, this idea of performance, so there is some, you're expressing something about yourself...
H: Umhm
B: ...how, I don't know what I want to say, how deliberate is are your performances, it seems as though they're not necessarily, what I'm feeling is that they're not very deliberate, like you, you don't appear to be...
H: You mean pre-planning how to work the audience or?
B: Yeah, sor/, yeah, um, deliberate in that, um, m m m, like you've said, you know, uh, the sexuality just comes out, uh...
H: Umhm
B: ...that um, your goal isn't to critique things necessarily, you know but you do want to push the boundaries...
H: Umhm
B: ...and sort of see what happens with that...
H: Umhm,
B: ...and see what happens with that...
H: ...Umhm, it's fun to push boundaries...
B: Yeah, like I just, I've always sort of understood performance as something like, maybe because I'm not a creative person, potentially...
H: Umhm
B: ...so I may very much misunderstand it, in the sense that I've sort of thought it was like, 'Well you know what, I want to put this sort of a message out and I'm going to use my body or and my art and my ability...
H: Umhm
B: ...to do this'
H: It can be, and I mean, Nikki might tell you something totally different for her,
B: Umhm, umhm
H: ...you know, and I, I mean definitely in some way and I also think part of it is, um , probably subconsciously I'm putting out issues, you know, like, you know, I I just I don't sit down and go 'What do I want to say to the world? What is my message?' You know, but I mean there's obviously points there that just come out naturally, like that, to cross boundaries or to be openly sexual, I'm just, it's not always a conscious decision on on your part. Um, but I mean there definitely some things are deliberate, like me, like the whip cream thing, we knew it was a heterosexual male audience and they would love that {Brandy chuckles} and,you know, that's going to get the some response and it got people talking about us, like if we'd hear them talking on the radio, you know, they'd be mentioning that always, you know, the whip cream thing and but at least we got them talking other wise sometime you do have to be deliberate in that sense where, where you, where we were using things to get a rise.
B: Yes
H: I just, I just personally do take it as seriously. I mean, I know, I'm going to get a rise from it but I wouldn't be freaking out if I saw it, you know, I'm just, maybe it's cause

I'm just use to it now
B: Umhm, yeah, you know, yeah, you're involved in, you know, an artistic community and, I'm just totally…
H: Yeah, but I just think it's funny. I get a kick out of people getting a rise out of it because, at least it keeps things interesting you know {Brandy chuckles}.
B: So it's good to make people talk, is that, is that?
H: Yeah! Totally, I mean, yeah, even if somebody were offended they didn't leave, like if they're complaining, people like getting riled up, people, whether they like it or not, people like, you know, things going on, exciting things, so I think the majority, the majority likes what we do but even if they don't, I don't mind, I mean, at least you're doing something that peolpe are talking about, you know.
B: Umhm
H: At least they talking.
B: Umhm, yes. Um, any, like I just, I don't, you know, I'm sort of talked about a lot of things or all of the things that I had kind of thought about, anything I'm?
H: I don't think so, we've covered quite a bit.
B: Yeah, well we must have {both chuckle}
H: Yeah. But um, yeah, generally I think peole are alittle too uptight with um, with the the normal roles we're suppose to play…
B: umhm
H: …in society. I think people need to loosen up a little bit with that and I think we kind of help that in our own little way for some people.
B: Umhm
H: Yeah. That's about it.
B: And really I don't have any more questions
H: Ok
B: Or, you know, things to talk about, so…
H: Yeah. Well if you think of anything else we can do it some/, tommorow if you want.
B: Yeah, ok. I will now off the tape {chuckles}
H: Ok
{Tape Off}

Appendix B
Interview Two Transcript
Nikki Prime-French/Miss Pussypants

B: {inadible} Okay, so we sort of went over this yesterday but um if there's absolutely anything you're uncomfortable with, don't wanta ask, anything...
N: Yeah.
B: ...just makes it, let me know, talk about, its no problem. Everything is of course totally voluntary but um most appreciated. {laughs} Um so, I talked to Heather yesterday um and I guess what I'm just wanted to start out with just a coupla basics, do you want, when I'm writing do you wanta be identified by your stages names or by your pers/, like by just your first name.
N: Either or
B: Either or
N: Either or, I have no qualms with using my real name or my stage name.
B: Okay. Okay. Perfect. Um let's see, so one of the things we talked about um, I was curious how you specifically identify your performances. Are they dancing, performance art, exotic dancing, what do you think?
N: Umm. I think that I'd call it, cause I've done all styles dancing and I would call it performance art, cause there's definitely an element of acting, more acting than dancing. Some of the times, um, and course its totally erotic. For where we're doing our shows and stuff you know, nightclubs and stuff like that its, seems to be what people like to see.
B: (laughs) Okay. So um how did you, um Heather said that you've both been dancing all your lives. How did you start? Do you consider this your career?
N: Umm, I consider like, the dancing as my career and teaching dancing, um...
B: Okay. Yeah. And how did you get started specifically with 'All You Can Eat'?
N: With 'All You Can Eat'? Is ah, when I was living in LA I had a dance show similar to 'All You Can Eat' called Psycho Dance Show and Heather and [male name], one of our founding members um used to come and watch the show all the time and stuff and then I got kicked back to Canada and um shortly after that I ran into the both of them here and they said that they wanted to start a dance show up similar to the Psycho Dance Show and wanted my help and then we just started to collaborate after that together.
B: Ok. And then um it just sort of came about that you kind of branched out into doing performances with bands?
N: Umm. Yeah well I'd been, I'd done that a lot. I had lotsa friends this town that are involved in the music industry and stuff and I was already doing that and then it just started that um my friends in Shocore were like, we love 'All You Can Eat', you know and we loved to have that some how in our show, you know. So we just took the basic, you know, stuff of 'All You Can Eat' and applied it to their show. And that's how it started, and then since after that you know everybody wants to have a bit of it in their, in their set you know {Brandy chuckles} so then...
B: So would you consider, um how would you consider your tour, your "All You Can Eat" tour and touring with the bands as different, or do you consider it the same?
N: You know, one thing I really like about um, performing with a band is the live music...
B: Umhm
N: ...like um it definitely adds a different element to the show, you know when you're, you can actually feel drums and you know what I mean. That's the only difference, I think, I mean as far as dancing for 'All You Can Eat' and for Shocore I felt it was just the same, you know.

B: Ok. Do you feel there's that same um aspect of performance art in it when you're performing let's say with Shocore?
N: Yeah. Yeah. I always like to, I mean I think that's the most important thing about our show is the performance art, you know what I mean. If we were just getting up there and doing dance steps, no one knows the dance steps, you know what I mean, its like maybe if we were performing for a group of dancers it would something but you know like, people just get, I mean 'wow, they did a turn', you know, like they don't know how hard it is. But they seem to react more to the, you know, the acting and the simulated masturbation or you know whatever. That seems to be you know the big element of 'All You Can Eat'.
B: So it seems like the audiences would be really different between let's say some one that's going to a club to see whether, ah you perform at both gay and straight clubs right?
N: Umhm. Yeah.
B: Seems like someone ah would be different, that audience it seems they would be very different than the audience that would be going to see Shocore.
N: You're absolutely right, absolutely right.
B: So, how does, you don't think that changes the performance?
N: Umm. Not really. Not for me…
B: Umhm.
N: …I mean I mean dancing for a a like a gay crowd is I mean it's a lot more fun, you know cause they just get into it and bang on the stage and you know {Brandy chuckles} they I mean they're not afraid to yell and scream and you know what I mean. Where as in a straight club with a straight crowd, you know the girls are looking at the guys like you know, {Brandy chuckles} and the guys are looking at their friends like, should I clap? Is it cool? Are you cl/? You know what I mean. There's a little bit more not, not so giving. You know what I mean, and it's a tougher crowd to win over. Believe me. Because girls like to see it and they like it but they don't want to admit it, you know. But then after the shows over the girls are on the dance floor dancing all crazy you know and its like 'yeah you gave in' {Brandy laughs} 'you like it'. So and actually it started out, when we first started out doing Shocore it started out like, it was a really mixed reaction at first like girls either hated it or loved it and then towards the end of it, it was like girls were our fans. Girls were our number one fans. Girls were like 'wow, that's so great that you could get up there and do that in a man's world. You know, you two are up there you know, ruling it' so that was, I liked that I mean.
B: Yeah.
N: It was a nice change. It's nice to see that change happen.
B: So you said that they were, they were really into it cause they felt that you were sort of up on stage, in control and stuff like that.
N: Yeah.
B: Why do you think women fans were {inaudible}..?
N: Oh yeah. For sure. You can see it. I can feel it when I'm up there like. You ha/, I have control over everyone, you know what I mean. And it's, it's, I mean it's a great feeling you know what I mean…
B: Umhm
N: …and what girl doesn't want that in a totally male dominated world. You know. Music. Industry. To be able to get up there and control all these guys standing up there.

You know what I mean? Its like what girl wouldn't want to have that power? {laughs}
B: So do you feel in control of the band and the audience?
N: Whadayamean the band?
B: Um, it's just that the feeling of control…
N: Yeah
B: …you said that you really feel like, is it more a control over the audience?
N: Yeah.
B: Okay, so it's not in reference to…
N: No Oh no, no, no. We're all, its, what happens on stage is like a machine right, like we all, it's a show, we all work together, it's not like someone overpowering someone or controlling, you know what I mean. We work together to control them, you know what I mean.
B: Okay. Okay. Yeah Yeah
N: So that's how, I never felt any kind of powers to control stuff on stage and if I did I probably wouldn't do it anymore.
B: Yeah. It sounded from what Heather had said, it sounded like your guy's performances were pretty much totally autonomous…
N: Yeah
B: …in that they hire you and you do what you want…
N: Yeah.
B: …if they don't like it that's fine, if you don't like doing it for them that's fine too.
N: Yeah. That's fine too yeah.
B: Okay.
N: I mean I think in the, when we first started doing this Heather and I talked and we were like you know, 'if at any minute we feel like we're you know, um like a, we don't feel comfortable with this or we feel like we're getting taken advantage of that's it'. (If) it's not gonna be fun anymore, what's the point of doing it right?
B: Umhm, umhm.
N: I mean you just want to get as much as you can and get out of it and make it work for you and if its not then that's it. I mean, its so funny Brandy, because like we got so much like all the record label people and stuff, they just don't know what to do with us cause we were two girls and we're really strong girls with opinions and we are like, hey, they'd say its this way and we'd say no, it's not gonna work out and if you want us then this is the way its gonna be and as soon as you do have an opinion things change. All of a sudden you're a bitch or you know 'she's mean' or you know. I dunno. It's really funny. It's really funny. Like how people perceive women in that industry that can stand and have an opinion, be strong, you know.
B: Has it been because you're strong and have an opinion has it been, and you said sometimes it it changes, makes people have negative views, um has it been a positive experience or a bit of both or..?
N: I think a bit of both…
B: Umhm
N: …yeah. I mean it was a real smack in the face, you know what I mean, cause, cause I never, I mean I never um really did anything on that side of the spectrum, like with music and the industry and stuff like that, so it was great because I learned a lot about the industry and stuff but not all of it was great, you know, not all was good.

B: Umhm, umhm
N: I really, I mean I really admire bands, or people that try to have a band and be successful cause it's really hard, you know what I mean, there's a lot of pressures so…
B: So is this, you said it was a slap in the face. Was it a slap in the face that people maybe weren't receptive to your opinions and your strength?
N: Umhm, oh yeah, definitely and it was also too like, we were such a huge part of the show you know, we got all the time people coming up and saying, 'you guys are great', you know, 'you guys are the show', right. But in then, you know its just it was a smack in the face because you know all of sudden the band wasn't the show. It was these two hired dancers, you know. And peop/, you know some people didn't like that. So and you know and they made it clear to us and that was you know a part of the smack in the face was that like, we do a really good job and that could be held against us {both chuckle}
B: I think it happens sometimes. {Brandy chuckles}
N: Yeah, yeah
B: Um, so you guys do all the choreography, all the costume choices, um do you, do you find inspiration for that in any particular place that you can think of or..?
N: No. Just that, whatever looks good and whatever feels good, right. Cause we don't wear whatever we have on. {Both laugh} So I think that, like the costumes is like the last thing we think of I mean…
B: Ok
N: …I wouldn't like to think that that would be like the main thing of our show, is that we have really great costumes, you know what I mean. {Brandy chuckles} So that's like, we put the, we put the least amount of time into our costumes.
B: Okay
N: We really need new costumes. {laughs} They're really getting trashed.
B: So what sorts of um, so there's never been an instance when the band who hired you said 'we want you to do this' and there was um like a, a disagreement because you, it seems that, that it just wasn't an issue because you sort of did what you want.
N: Yeah well they really did give us a lot of freedom I mean like I said they've all seen our show before and that's why they hired us, besides the fact that we were good friends, right. But um they've seen our show before and and they know what we did and we said like if we're gonna do this, this is how we want to do it cause its, you know, our names and this is how we want to portray ourselves, you know, and they did have some input, like you know, did a little more improv in the beginning and they said 'oh, we actually like when you guys have more choreographed stuff', so I mean I'm not opposed to that kind of input at all…
B: Umhm, umhm
N: …but they tried to change what we did and if anything they I mean they got a hoot out of it, you know, when we were up there just going crazy. You see in the video tape like there's this, they're shaking their heads and laughing, like, 'the girls?!', you know like. It got, sometimes it got really crazy up there and like with water flying around and all their equipment and they never, they always stood up for us. You know it was good. Yeah.
B: So was it, you were saying that sometimes it was a slap in the face in the industry, was it more the music comp/, like the record companies as opposed to the bands specifically?
N: Umhm. And other bands too, you know like, 'who are these chicks?' you know

'they're just the dancers'. But then once they saw what we did they were like 'Hey, let's hang out'. You know what I mean?
B: Umhm
N: ...so like you knew that initial meeting meeting you're like, 'you're not gonna like me now but I know later on you're gonna want to be hangin out with me'. {both laughing} And it worked out that way and that was fine I mean, Heather and I like we did a pretty good job, we kept our distance. We um, you know what I mean we we spent lots of the time together in our hotel rooms hanging out, doing girl's things, you know cause we're with ten other guys you know what I mean. So I think that was like part of the sanity was that being able to have each other...
B: Mm, umhm
N: ...and and just remove yourself from all that and be able to just be cool and mellow out, you know, cause its like crazy life...
B: Yeah
N: ...yeah, drinking and every one wants you to drink and drink and then like after a while you're just like 'ah, man there's gotta be something else to do', you know.
B: Umhm
N: It's tiring...
B: Yeah
N: ...it's really tiring, really grueling. Yeah.
B: So you perform with 'All You Can Eat' show, you perform in gay and straight clubs. And you said you had a husband. Do you yourself, um, identify as heterosexual, queer, homosexual?
N: Me?
B: Yeah.
N: Um, I would say I'm bisexual. Um I think that's part of the reason why um I find, you know being a performer is being able to see beauty in female and male and...
B: Umhm
N: ...um yeah.
B: Okay. Um does that, does that is/, do you think informs you're performances at all, like feeds into or sort of um gives it shape?
N: Sure. Yeah.
B: How do you think so?
N: Umm. Well I think it just makes us like ah, it gives our show a little bit more um spectrum you know what I mean, where we can be straight or we can be gay or we can be mad or psycho or crazy or horny, you know what I mean. I think being able to be anything or being able to or willing to accept that you're anything or could be anything is like, I think that's pretty much what rounds out our show. Makes our show good, you know what I mean, is that we go to a straight club and we you know, I eat Heather's ass and you know we you know what I mean we get crazy and people like whoa, and then we go to like gay clubs and we do straight, you know, girl, guy and then people like, you know what I mean, but I mean, that's for the fun of it, right, to show them what they don't usually see, right?
B: Yeah
N: So I think it really does round us out a lot is that we can do anything and we're not afraid to do anything, {Brandy chuckles}, you know.

B: So how, how do you see your performances, like what do they mean to you?
N: Therapy. It's my therapy.
B: Yeah?
N: If I had, I don't know what I'd do if I couldn't do it. I mean to tell you the truth like Heather and I spend, we don't ever make money doing this, we spend more than what we make and but the only reason why we do it is because you know if we didn't do it I would be like a ball of frustration. It's definitely my therapy. It means so much to me and it's been that way ever since I was young you know.
B: Dancing has been?
N: Yeah
B: Ok
N: Yeah
B: Um, is there, um, like we sort of talked, you know um Heather had mentioned something about sort of, not a goal, I I really don't want to put words in your mouth but an issue that came up was pushing boundaries…
N: Umhm
B: …and you sort of addressed that in the sense that that the freedom to be whatever you want, showing people what they don't normally see, how much is it about that for you, like...
N: I think that's like probably one of the reasons that I really do the show you know is to push those boundaries, you know what I mean. I mean its boring to go see things that you see every day, you what I mean. It's boring to go to a club and see a band stand there and you know they just sit, stand there and play their instruments and its boring, you know what I mean. I think that's why we started doing this is that it was like, there's gotta be more you know what I mean. There's gotta be something more than that. I mean there's gotta be visual stimulation and audio. There's gotta be more. I don't know like I never, I don't think I ever, ever set out to do something like what every one else is doing. You know what I mean? I always chose to do things differently. I'm not a commercial person. I don't try to be and I wouldn't ever wanna be. I wanna do things different. Like I don't wanna be the same as everyone. You know what I mean?
B: So is there any goal to become famous at all or?
N: I used to always think like, what was success measured to me like. Is success like fame or money or or what is success to me and success to me now is like so different, I think what I do is as long as what I'm doing what I wanna do that's success to me. I'm happily married. My husband is our manager. I mean he sees what I do and he loves it like, that I think that's success to me. I have a great partner. And we have a great working relationship so I think that yeah, mm, yeah. {Brandy chuckles}
B: Um lets see um is it about the pushing the boundaries, what sorts of boundaries, what, I I think of things like gender boundaries…
N: Umhm
B: …boundaries regarding sexuality, like strict, you have to be heterosexual or homosexual, you know, maybe bi if you really want to stretch it…
N: Right, right
B: …you know? Um, it, is it about those sorts of things for you or, no?
N: Not really.
B: Okay.

N: Don't really think about those kinda things at all. I mean. I don't know. It just happens {laughs}, you know what I mean…
B: Yeah?
N: …people are like, you know a girls comes up to us, ' Oh, you know, like you know, you give me such hope', you know and I'm like that's not what we like started out to do, that wasn't our purpose. But if that happens, that's Cool you know like but its not, we don't really think about it that much but then people really like take what they want or pick what they can get out of the show and then when people tell us about it its like, 'that's cool you know, because that's not what we're really going for but if that's what you got out of it, that's great', you know what I mean. So I never like go about things thinking of doing it a certain way or doing it. And you know I always choreograph something one way and then when you get on stage its like completely different, you know what I mean. Its like, doing the show is like really all about just spur of the moment. You know what I mean?
B: Umhm
N: And with our dancers, we never direct them and like 'this is how you act and this is how you'll be'. We just say 'be yourself, do whatever you want, do whatever you feel's comfortable'. We don't force people into characters, you know, the characters just happen. And I think we've picked people because they are characters you know what I mean. If you look at these pictures I mean, I mean no one's normal, well I guess what is normal right? {Brnady chuckles}But yeah...
B: Umm. Um so have how you see your performances and the meaning of them changed over time, as you've been…
N: Umm, yeah I think I've grown up a lot though too. You know what I mean. I used to be a lot crazier and mmm. Changed differently like I don't 'now, I can't necessarily change like if you if you saw, I guess our shows have changed a little bit but as far as our dancing, our style, our topics or anything like that we're still on the same road. You know what I mean. I think we're just all growing up a little bit and, but the show isn't {both chuckle}
B: Um, so Heather talked about, she mentioned that a lot of the same themes always come up in your choreography…
N: Umhm
B: …and I'm just curious as to what exactly those are. Or if you would know, ya you see I'm not sure exactly, she she said we um...
N: Well we do a lot of like sexploitation. Like we really exploit it. You know what I mean. That's a theme. I mean Heather and I are the token tarts you know what I mean, like we make fools of ourselves. We don't go up there trying to be sexy, you know. We're more fools. We do you know, we do the same old, you know shticks, you know like you know we do issues, we do rape and and Aids and we've done you know...umm as far as themes yeah I think we're just constantly reinventing ourselves and there's definitely a pattern in our show that we've noticed now where we do like campy stuff, to rock and roll to you know salsa you know but as far as like 'there's a certain theme', I don't know really what she's talking about. Cause I think that really does I mean change from and you know depending on what the show is like what we're doing it for, a fashion show, you know what I mean. We have burlesque shows. We have crazy Halloween shows. You know what I mean. So its, its always changing.

B: Ok. So what exactly, I'm not sure, exactly what you mean by sexploitation. Like just ah.

N: Exploiting it. You know what I mean umm. Throwing it in peoples faces. Umm, showing people what probably they don't want to see but they know it's like that, you know like, 'I can't look but I have to'. You know what I mean? And like, people are like, 'how, why, why do you do that? How do do you do it? Why?' And its like, 'cause it's the look on people's faces', that is such the reward, you know. {Brnady chuckles}Like you know, girls are supposed to be a certain way you know and so its fun to get on stage and be totally opposite. You know, be every thing that everyone, you know, your grandfather and your mother told you not to be. You know what I mean. Like my mom watches the shows and she's just like, 'I don't get it, like why do you wanna do that?' And I'm like, 'it's art mom!' {Brandy chuckles}You know/ So I think like sex is a big issue for us and I mean it's a big issue for everyone and it's a big issue for people in a club because lots of people are gonna be hookin up and going home and having sex, you know. So we make fun of it um you know, we take serious sides of it. Our show is a sex show, it's sexy girls and boys you know.

B: Um, was it, how did you, you mentioned that you had taken on um sort of things about rape and Aids. How, how did, tell me about that, like how did you do that?

N: Like rape or like one issue we did was um like um, you know, girls, girls that get raped or something like that was um we put a twist on like, instead of her being the one that's being raped is we turned it where while she's was getting raped she started to enjoy it…

B: Umhm

N: …and um we got into a little bit of trouble about that.

B: Yeah, that's interesting.

N: People in the audience that had some rough times or whatever like that.

B: Umhm, umhm

N: But its like in the long run we made the guy look like the asshole. You know what I mean. We made the girl look like the strong one that like took over the situation and like switched it so where he was the powerless one and she was like you know, turning on him so. I don't think that's I mean but I think I'm a little bit twisted sometimes like, I would like to go to a club and see something like that. I think everyone else wants to see it too, you know what I mean, but um, I have gotten in trouble lotsa times for doing stuff like that. Um but ya ur um masturbation, you know everyone does it but no one wants to see it on the stage, you know what I mean. And an/ people have mixed feelings about that for sure. Um like, Heather and I have this like you know, ritual that every show, I eat her ass, not a lot of people like seeing that. You know what I mean, but that's almost like, that's when its fun. You know what I mean, when you see people around, they're disgusted. Its like, 'oh come on'. You know its like she's got her panties on still. You know. Its just show. Ah, I never understand like why people take it so seriously. Its, it is a comedy show like, I think it's so funny and I think its only in the last coupla years that people actually started to get our humor. You know like when we sit down and we do these shows its like we have a coupla glasses of wine and we are cracking up. You know what I mean. And even onstage sometimes I look at Heather and I just howl, like its funny but then you look out and you don't see people laughing. {both laughing throughout} Or something and its like okay. I guess they really didn't get the humor. But

its always just for us. I mean we have such a good time doing it, it's worth it, right.
B: So yeah um that issue, the issue of power because it seems um like its very much about you guys as opposed to you know, pleasing an audience or um.
N: Umhumm. Us first. Then them. You know what I mean? Because you know what if there was like five people in the room or if there was 500 its gonna be the same show. We always have fun doing it. It's never different. It doesn't matter who's in the crowd or um you know what I mean. It's always a good show. And the five people that are there will have a great time. You know what I mean. So it doesn't, I mean. Its us first, you know what I mean. We all do, we don't make money doing this so itss like we're doing this all. Everybody's got different reasons and we go in doing, saying okay let's get what we came here and you know, and then leave. And if people have a good time that's great, you know what I mean.
B: Umhm. Um, hm, hm, hm. What was I going to say? Um, oh yeah, sorry, speaking of audiences, um the issue of reception of course is very important. You're saying sometimes people don't get the humor. They don't get what you're trying to put out. How do you generally see people as um receiving you, receiving your performance?
N: I think at first like when we started four years ago. It was like, they called us kids and, you know, they didn't take us seriously. But now, I mean, we get the greatest reception now, and its exciting, its like 'about time!' you know like, it just goes to show like, you know that old saying, like if you believe in something and you work hard something's gonna happen and it seems like Heather and I were saying the other day, it seems like, nowadays like we don't book shows, they come to us. Like um you know, each show lands something else, you know what I mean, it's like a um like a stepping stone for us, you know and that's exciting. I mean because we've been working hard doing this for four years, you know, like slaving and trying to convince clubs that you know that wanna hire a dance show, you know what I mean. So its only now that all these clubs that were probably saying no to us three years ago are calling us and saying 'Hey, we want to book 'All You Can Eat'', you know.
B: Umhm
N: So that's definitely rewarding because, you know, this has been like my baby for four years and actually people are really loving it and receiving it well. That's such a compliment to me. Just makes it all worthwhile.
B: Um do you think different people, um receive it differently, like I'm, I'm thinking specifically of Shocore, like do you ever run into people that think its like you know exploitation and you know ah I guess, maybe the argument that 'its just like stripping' or anything like that, how does that...
N: Yeah, well I think that's pathetic if anyone's says were strippers. {Brandy chuckles} I mean because that's such a small element of what we did. I mean we took our tops off for thirty seconds, you know and we got called sluts. I know, it doesn't bother me. I know sometimes it bothers Heather but I mean, yeah, the thing is is that like girls, well guys too, they thought like after the show, they thought that we were the people on like the people, the people we were on stage or the people that we are off stage, you know what I mean...
B: Umhm
N: ...so they come up to us and be all touchy and think that that's cool and then when we turn around and say, 'hey I'm married' and they're like 'what?' And they don't want to

talk to you. And then the girls are like pissed off cause like the guys or boyfriends are liking it you know but we never got anyone ever saying that it was you know anyone ever really freaking on us or saying they didn't like it. I mean because who's gonna say that, I mean in this day and age, what we did wasn't even that shocking right? But and so who's gonna come up and say that kind of thing right? You know, we found that if anyone had anything bad to say they probably just kept it to themselves.

B: Umhm

N: If anything it was just like called, 'sluts', you know, 'strippers, whores', that kind of stuff but whoever's saying that is just silly. I don't listen to it anyways. I don't buy into that. I used to be a stripper. And I don't think there's anything wrong with being a stripper. I know everyone doesn't agree with that so, if someone calls me a stripper it doesn't bug me. You know what I mean, like whatever. {laughs}

B: How, what do you see as being the differences between um when you've done, when you've done stripping and when you do performance art?

N: Oh, so much I mean, being a stripper is like like, money, just money, its money, money, money, right. And its not a, like they don't care just do turns and kicks and stuff like that. They just want to see your boobs and ass and you know what I mean. So for me, when I did it for a time in LA, it was just money right, and, and I didn't mind it. I didn't like it. I didn't do it for long…

B: Umhm

N: …but it was good money. But because I'm a dancer it was like you know this is, a tease almost, you know cause I just wanna dance. But that's not what they want, you know.

B: Umhm, ok

B: So our show is is fully choreographed and its dancing, I mean. We do dance and people think it looks great. I mean if a dancer was ever in the audience they'd say, 'holy shit', you know, 'you guys are dancing your asses off out there', you know what I mean.

B: Umhm

N: So, that's really important to me is is to always be, I mean be crazy and take your top off and stuff but always be dancing you know. Always show them that you're not just a one trick pony. You know that, there's talent behind what we do. You know what I mean? And I know that with Heather and I both, that's a really important thing. Like we just shot a video with the band and it was super dancey. And when I saw the takes afterwards it just looks just so good. You know what I mean, because we hear we're crazy girls and stuff like that but we were kickin ass. You know what I mean and so that's what I like, I like that feeling, you know. I don't like to feel like I'm just stripping. You know what I mean?

B: Umhm, umhm, oh yeah. Certainly. Um I'm just short of kind of jumping around. I noticed in one of the pictures, in a few of the pictures, you have like 'Sloppy Cunt' written across you, so what exactly is that about?

N: Um. Heather, we do a wet tee shirt contest.

B: Ok

N: And um there's three characters. Heather's 'Drunk Whore', I'm 'Sloppy Cunt' and then there's 'Pussy Bitch'.

B: Okay.

N: And, and there's like a MC and with the signs and then the winner is [male name],

this guy here [points to a picture on the table], our androgynous little boy. And he comes out of Carrie's blood, stuff, I don't know, but that's the where 'Sloppy Cunt' and 'Drunk Whore' come from and actually those, like we've had, we've, Heather's run into like some girls on set once when she was doing Josie and um they were talking about 'All You Can Eat' and Heather was like 'well, I'm in 'All You Can Eat'' and she was like, 'which one are you, are you the 'Drunk Whore' or 'Sloppy Cunt'?' And Heather was like 'I couldn't believe they remembered those names', you know what I mean, its funny like, a lot of people, those names stick out. And like I know a lot of people like tease me and call me that all the time and stuff like that but it's was funny. I wouldn't peg myself with it if I didn't think I was gonna get teased. You know what I mean?

B: Umhm

N: And that is so like its so funny when you come out on stage and like Heather's 'Drunk Whore' and she's got a bottle of booze and arrgh, all over the place, and falls on the ground and stuff like that and people actually read your shirt, you know, they're like 'Drunk Whore!?' you know and then like I come out 'Sloppy Cunt!?' like, you know. I dunno. Its funny like. You find too many girls pegging themselves, 'Drunk Whore' or 'Sloppy Cunt' or, you know what I mean.

B: Did you, um cause, did you, cause I know, like say um, the punk, you know punk women…

N: Umhm

B: …like, what's that band? You know they've sort of reappropriated by labeling themselves as that, to take the power away from others that would label them as that.

N: Umhm

B: Did it come from that or..?

N: Nuhu, we were just like, like I said, sitting around having some wine and we're like we, so have to think of character and Heather's like I'm gonna be 'Drunk Whore', and I'm like I'm gonna be 'Sloppy Cunt', and that's as far as it was.

B: Ok.

N: Yeah it was just something that we thought was funny like our humor coming out in the show right. And we think its funny and that's why we do it. Has no other reason behind it. I mean Heather isn't a 'Drunk Whore' and I am not a 'Sloppy Cunt'. {Brandy chuckles}

B: Umhm. Um, let's see. So, um do you experience your body a lot differently when you're dancing, like I don't know a lot about performance but my understanding is is that you're relationship with your bodies' like potentially a lot more in tune…

N: Umhm

B: …or um a lot more comfortable when some performers are on stage, do you find that at all or..?

N: Like with with my body type?

B: Umm

N: Or is it how I feel is like.

B: Just tell me how you feel about your body. Um are you really comfortable with it.

N: Yeah. Yeah. You know. No one's perfect and I think that's what's great about Heather and I is that we don't try to be. I mean, I mean, you know, I'm so comfortable with who I am, I don't care if anyone likes it or doesn't, you know what I mean. That doesn't bother me at all and I know it doesn't bother Heather. And that's so besides the fact you know

what I mean. And um my body to me is my, this is my tool, you know what I mean. Where as acting is you know, your voice is your tool. This is like how I talk, you what I mean, with my body. And if I had qualms about it you know what I mean it just wouldn't work, you know what I mean. Ah, I just don't care. I don't care. I don't diet. I mean I'm married. I only have to impress my husband. {Brandy chuckles}You know what I mean, like, I don't care about those guys out there. You know what I mean. And that's I think one of the great things about it is that Heather and I aren't perfect. You know, we're not that typical big boobs, you know, small waist kind of girls. And I think that's what a lot of girls did like to see was that we were real women up there, you know and not afraid to show our bodies and not starving our selves and trying to be something else. It's that we were just raw. We're just two girls up there. You know what I mean. Not trying to be anything but just having fun, you know.

B: Um. Let's see…

N: I think if I had a problem with my body I wouldn't be a dancer. {laughs}

B: Umhm

N: You know what I mean, you just couldn't, you couldn't do it. It would be too much of a mind game. You know what I mean?

B: Yeah. Um so do you have, what are your, what would you say are your intentions behind any of your performances. Like you said its therapy.

N: Umhm

B: Um, are there other intentions behind it? Make people laugh? Making them…

N: Yeah. Oh yeah. Well hopefully they laugh and they have a good time like. Like I said earlier, you know, one of the greatest things is just look at the looks on their faces. You know what I mean. That's like one of the most rewarding things ever. You know, the look of shock or laughing or disgust or something like that. Almost like feeds you energy when you're up there. You know what I mean. And you pick out people in the audience that are having a great time and you find yourself totally performing for those people. You know what I mean. And they're, that'll just totally make or break it, you know what I mean, is the people out there. That's what I love. It's therapy and I love to see the shock, you know, I love the shock value of what I do. I love shocking people. Um I like entertaining people, bottom line.

B: Umhm

N: Yeah

B: Neat. Um, so we talked about, um, audience receptions, how they're received. Do you think umm, let's say when you're performing in a gay or a straight club that that people receive you differently in those two different venues, or...

N: No. I think that people are just like, it's a dance show and no one else is doing this. You know what I mean? And so I think people are just like just, you know, its not, its not it's just the same thing as people are like, 'what's this? Like where did this come from?' You know what I mean. Like especially in a straight you know, a straight club that expects to see a band and all, suddenly a group of fuckin' banshee girls shows up on stage and starts squirting water and throwing fish at them you know. Its like. What? You know. In a gay club, they're expecting some drag queen to come out and lip sync Whitney Houston and you get two girls making a birthday cake on stage and flour is everwhere. You know what I mean. So its like in each instance its I think a shock to them, not expecting to see it. You know. To see that and I think that's one of our greatest

elements about our show is that, I mean, it's kind of a sabotage on the audience, a little bit. I think we pick on them a little bit {both laugh}. By like you know, drenching them with water and fish and lettuce and eggs and flo/, you know what I mean. One time we did this Halloween show and we just came on with pumpkins and hammers and smashed, the whole thing was just us smashing and throwing pumpkin bits everywhere and um so…

{Phone rings}

B: Just, do you want, if you want to get it

N: I'll get it

{Tape Off}

N: Anyways, so pumpkin smashing {Brandy chuckles}and guts everywhere. And we're like, like these people in their like leather pants and their Halloween costumes, you know, and there's like seeds all over them and guts and the whole dance floor is just destroyed and there's like pieces of pumpkin every where, like we were jumping on them and squashing them. It was just a mess. And people were like, you know pissed off cause we got them all messy and stuff like that but then we were like, you know, like, {Imitates a sinister laugh} total sabotage. I actually got, almost punched out once for getting flour on a girl. You know it was either me or her and I just wound up punched her {both laugh} and then I ran out like I was a big chicken. I was like, 'ahhh, ahhh, ahhh!' {Brandy laughs} But like yeah, that was a long time ago. People are pretty funny, like we get like people that come to our shows and they know now and they bring umbrellas or um garbage bags and they cut a whole in it you know, and put it on like people are, they know about it now so they're, or people have cameras, we kinda say 'hey, you know back out. You know cause you're gonna get it.' You know what I mean? So.

B: Um, is there ever a point where you feel or have you ever felt this, that you're um your performances have either been too sexual or too shocking, you know?

N: {shakes her head}

B: No?

N: I don't think there's anything such thing as that. I mean I don't think there's such a thing as too sexual or too shocking. I mean, to me, for me. I don't think that would ever cross my mind at all. If anything I think, I also think was it sexy enough? Or was it shocking enough? You know what I mean?

B: Umhm, umhm. Cause I'm thinking of things like um, things that are so exaggerated that they don't become attractive any more…

N: Umhm

B: …I'm thinking specifically of like let's say, like ah oh like ridiculous things like, oh I shouldn't say the word ridiculous, but things like um ah I've seen them mostly in, in reference to strippers but like women with so many breast implants that they're like, you know, ridiculously large…

N: Umhm

B: …like I think for a lot of people that's not even sexual anymore…

N: Exactly

B: …like its such a. So there's, you've never experienced that. Maybe, why, how come? Just...

N: Well, I don't know.

B: Is it more of a a, what comes to my mind is more of a natural sexuality, like what

you're expressing or ah.
N: Yeah, I mean I think I'm a very sexual person anyways. But, yeah I don't know, I mean no, I don't, I don't, I mean I can see how some people might not think what we do is sexy, you know what I mean. I can totally see that. But I think what we do is sexy. I think that's sexy and it turns me on doing it. You know what I mean? But I don't ever think it's too much. At all. Or, you know, over done. You know what I mean.
B: Umhm, umhm
N: I think on stage, there's no such thing as over done. You know? Its better to over do it than under do it, you know what I mean. So, like that's what I was saying before, that's always my main thing is, 'did we under do it?' You know what I mean?
B: Mm, umhm, umhm
N: Did we not do it enough?
B: Umhm
N: But, but its never you know, too much. I don't think in our show.
B: So why do you think people might not find it sexy?
N: Umm, because you know some guys just aren't turned on, you know, turned on by girls that do what we do, you know what I mean?
B: Like in strength. Like being in control of your performances?
N: Yeah. Being strong women up there. Not afraid to show their sexuality. Not afraid to take their tops off and laugh and laugh with them and laugh at themselves and you know what I mean like some men like I think more meeker women. You know polite, respectful…you what I mean like that. But boring. You know what I mean. But I mean to those people, I don't really care {laughs} I know that sounds really bad but I wouldn't do it if I cared about that kind of stuff, you know what I mean. There'd be no room for this if I thought that.
B: So you said for you it's very sexual as well.
N: Umhm!
B: Um so how, how, tell me about that, like...
N: Mmm. Well, it's just all my dancers, look at these girls, they're hot. You know what I mean? And we have fun, we play around on stage together and I think that, that's the added element in our show is that like you can tell we're having a good time, you know. You know, kissing or you know what I mean. Like you can tell its fun and its not contrived or you know, staged or something. We actually have a good time doing it. You know what I mean?
B: Umhm
N: And that's, like that's sexy. Sexy to me is like seeing a girl go up there and and do it, you know what I mean, like I watch my dancers and I'm like, I get turned on by all of them because I see, you know, they're so Strong and Bold, you know, and that's sexy to me and that turns me on. And you know like you can feel everybody's energy on stage, everyone's got different energy and you fully feed off each other, you know what I mean, like, a good show is when everyone's really lookin' at each other and acknowledging each other up there and we're doing this up here and you know its like a it's a really neat feeling, it's a good feeling. When you have the right mix of people, you know it feels great, it really works good. And that's what makes performances just great like makes a good show is when you see people up there, actually enjoy being up there together. And they're having fun and they're laughing and they're yelling and you know running

around and silly string and you know what I mean? {Brandy chuckles} It's, that's fun, I think. I think with anything like even if you go watch anything like you know like, the repoire of the people working together is so important, you know what I mean.
B: Hm, umm, let's see. You, y/, so you talk about a lot about the strengths you know, you know the powerful woman umm on stage. So does that umm, do you feel that that extends into your life, your personal life as well?
N: Umhm, yeah, yeah.
B: So how do you think it does that?
N: Umm. Well, I'm kind of a no bullshit kind of girl. You know, if someone pisses me off I have no qualms to say it, you know, umm. I have strong opinions umm I'm crazy, I don't really care what anyone thinks about me. Umm, like me or leave me I don't really care. {Brandy chuckles}You know what I mean? That doesn't bug me. I have my friends and that's all that matters. You know what I mean?
B: Umhm
N: Umm, yeah I don't really get intimidated that much by boys. I'm not a jealous person. I'm pretty secure with who I am. I've had a really weird, weird um career with dancing. Lots of touch n go and bad luck and stuff. But I think that like it's never really got me down or anything. You know what I mean, like I said before, I've learned that like success to me is a lot different than what it was years ago you know. So I'm pretty, a pretty confident, secure person and I like to surround myself with people like that too and that's, I look at Heather a lot and I see a lot of the same things in Heather and yeah I just really like women like that. You know I don't like weak women. And I choose not to be around them. You know, when girls act silly and stupid, I'm just walk away cause I hate girls like that {both laugh}. You know? Uh, {inaudible}…
B: So, oh sorry.
N: No, that's all right
B: Um, I was gonna say, for you what, what exactly, can you think of things that to you um, what does it mean for you to be a woman? Could you define that at all or..?
N: You know its funny cause I actually think I was supposed to be a man. I really do, like I think I shoulda been a man. I act more like a man. I act more like a man than my husband {both laugh}. You know what I mean? Like, he's the female. I'm the male. Umm, but as far as what, what being a woman means to me, I think that like being a woman's changed a lot since like, I was talking to my mom, like from when she was my age and stuff like that and I think that women these days have a responsibility to like, you know um, to not be weak. And to be bold and to not let a man's world let you, stop you from doing anything. You know what I mean? If anything, like pull up your trousers and buckle up you know. Saddle up you know. Like I look at those challenges and that's what gets me excited, that's what makes me wanna like accomplish things and and accomplish being a woman in a mans world or doing that like, you know, like I think like the most important thing for me is to just um be a good person but be strong and, and , and try to make all the females out there proud. {Brandy laughs} You know what I mean?
B: Um, n n n, so, so clearly I would say then, how do you feel about restrictions between, you know there's there's a lot of restriction between different gender roles…
N: Umhm
B: …you know men have to be like this, women have to be like that. Yeah

{Nikki shakes her head}
B: Not very valid? {chuckles}
N: I think that's stupid. I don't think anyone should be a certain way. You know what I mean. I mean I think that you shou/, just I think for everybody just be strong, believe in yourself kinda thing but I don't think that, I don't believe that women should be a certain way or men should be a certain way. I think that's totally up to the individual. You know what I mean?
B: Umm. I was just, let me jump back to um. Oh, so, how do you think your performance is experienced by you as specifically gendered like in the sense that um, could men do it? How would that look? Like...
N: Oh for sure. Yeah and we do have two men do it. You know what I mean? In a straight club we make them do it. You know what I mean? And they're scared they're gonna get their asses kicked, you know {both laugh}. But they do it. I mean, I think that two women and two men or a woman and a man or four guys on one girl. I think its all good. Flesh is flesh. It's all beautiful. You know what I mean? I definitely think that men naked aren't as attractive as women {both chuckle}. But I mean I like to see two men kiss. You know, like I think that's beautiful. I think it's even more beautiful when two men can get on stage and do it.
B: Umhm, umhm
N: You know what I mean? Like, I think…
{Side one of tape ends. Side two starts}
B: Ok. So we were talking about people being more accepting of all sorts of behavior. Talk...
N: For sure. I think people just need to be like more open and and more willing to accept things new. I mean as each like year or decade moves on its like people are being able to do more and be more, you know what I mean, and I think that's great as long as people can accept it, you know what I mean, and let it happen and and and like it and see the beauty in everything, you know what I mean. I think there's nothing more attract, unattractive than a man saying that he likes to see two girls but can't stand the fact of seeing two guys, you know. I think that's so silly. It doesn't make sense to me at all. You know what I mean? So yeah, I think just being more receptive to all different kinds of people. And, whatever your sexual preference is you know.
B: Umhm. Do you um do you, would you have the hope that maybe somehow your performances contribute to that?
N: I'd like to hope so. Yeah. For sure. I would like to definitely think that our show does things like that. Makes people think differently or that they come in thinking one thing and leaving, going, 'well hey, you know, that was pretty cool.' You know maybe we didn't fully change their mind about things but at least for like an hour they leave thinking about it and going, 'alright, like, I never really thought about that before but now I see it little differently.' I mean, I'm not expecting people like I'm not expecting to change the world or change anyone's views but maybe just give them some other points to think about or you know what I mean.
B: How do you think your performances make people think about different things, pushing the boundaries?
N: I think like I said before, like girls, girls you know in the beginning of the show are like, 'whatever' and then afterwards they're like out on the floor doing our moves and

getting all sexy, you know what I mean? I think it does change people. You see it, like at the end of the night we do a show and then afterwards the dance floor's Packed, and everyone's like doing the 'All You Can Eat' moves, {Brandy laughs}, you know, and doing it all and that's when we just stand back with drinks and we're like 'we did that.' Know what I mean? {Brandy laughs} That's really great. So I do, I do think it makes people open up a little bit more you know and like 'hey those girls did it, let's do it' you know? And we get a lot of girls come up to us, 'we wanna be in your show and laaa la la. I took ballet for, you know, a year when I was five', you know and its like, 'Right'. So you get a lot more of that after the show, people, people, yeah, people freak out, yeah. People like, some girls really freak out and say, 'you know at first I was like oh my god but you guys kick ass', you know. So it's great to hear that. You know what I mean? It's great to hear that they came and left with a different attitude, yeah...

B: So that do you think that people specifically like about your performances?

{phone rings} Maybe we can pause it there for a moment. {tape stops}

B: I was just asking how or what or why do you think people enjoy your performances so much?

N: Ummmm, cause its fun. You know what I mean? It's comedy. It's fun. It's like seeing what you don't usually see. You don't even see it on TV You know what I mean. And like what a great treat to like pay all this money to go see a fashion show and boring and you know and then you get to see this big circus show at the end, you know what I mean? It's like, I think it makes you kinda feel like you got your moneys worth. You know what I mean? Cause like definitely going to clubs is boring. Like, don't you, I mean I think that. I mean, I, I get really bored and you pay all this money and it's la na na. Like what a great thing would it be if, I always think like I wish I could sit and watch my show, you know like, I wish I could go somewhere and see something like that. You know what I mean, like I think its just fun. People have fun and it's hilarious. People are just like shocked and they can't believe they saw what they saw. And you know, you know just they have a good time. People do. The reception is getting so much better. People scream and holler and you know. Or, 'we want our picture with you!' And you know. It's funny. It's really funny.

B: Do you think um it has ah, how do you think do you think it has anything to do with the sexuality of the show? That they're that they enjoy or are drawn to or

N: I think what we get the most is, 'I can't believe you guys did that.'

{Phone rings}

N: Sorry

{Tape off}

B: So, yeah we were just talking about um if it's, if it's, whether or not it's the sexuality that people are drawn to.

N: Mmm. Oh, for sure. I mean most of our show is sexual. You know what I mean? I think that is probably one of the biggest elements and I think they're totally drawn to that. Everyone's a sexual creature. Everyone likes to watch sex or see it or little innuendos and stuff like that you know, so I do think its like a big draw for sure. Big attraction. And I think that's what makes people come back, you know. What are they gonna do next? You know what I mean? {Both laugh} And we always do a different show, so, people really like that, yeah.

B: Um, I was just, I just thought of this, um, in one of the shows, I think it was during

'Barbie Girl' or whatever, was it flour that you were throwing around?
N: Yeah but we were pretending it was cocaine.
B: Ohh. Ok…
N: Yeah
B: …ok, I wasn't there. Ok, I was like...
N: I know you can't really tell, and they're like 'what are they doing?' But like when you see that we had it all over her nose and we're all wired and stuff…
B: Ohh. Okay. No I was just curious I was like, 'hmmm?' {laughs}…
N: 'What does this mean?'
B: …and it's, it's pretty like, you know, you're pretty far away.
N: Yeah, yeah, yeah
B: I'm sure it was very different…
N: Yeah, yeah
B: …sitting there watching
N: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's a favorite. Lots of people like that one.
B: {chuckles} Yeah my cousin really liked that one. We were watching it. She was like, 'that's great! I love that one!' {Both chuckle} Umm, so if, in, in, in the time we've spent talking here, do you think there's things that I'm missing about your performances? Things that I haven't asked about? What would you tell me about your performance if you had five minutes, an hour, however long, to tell me all about your show?
N: Umm. I don't know. I think that we like really covered it. I haven't talked this much about my show in a long time. Umm, I don't know it's, I don't think that there'd be anything else that I could possibly say, you know, besides that it's just really fun. It's fun to do and its fun to watch. And like, Heather's par/, it's funny cause like you know older crowds and stuff you know like, 'they won't get it. They won't like it.' And Heather's parents surprised her and tricked her and they showed up and watched some of the shows and they just loved it. You know what I mean? And it was good that she didn't know, cause like she probably woulda held back a little bit but she didn't know and so she like really was givin her. And they were like 'Outa sight!' You know, like? I don't know, like it's for everyone I think. Anyone can see the humor in it. If you, I think if you're an open-minded person, you know what I mean, you'll, you'll definitely see the humor. You'll probably even get our humor. You know what I mean?
B: Umhm
N: But yeah, I don't know it's a fun, crazy show. Bunch of girls.
B: Do you think the humor comes out more in the 'All You Can Eat' than it does in the, than with Shocore?
N: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Uhuh. Well we, we were pretty funny actually in Shocore. It's ju/. Well, 'All You Can Eat', like we pick the songs you know and and you know its not its not, you know Shocore it was their music and you know and you know, most of their songs aren't funny, you know what I mean? {Brandy chuckles} So it was basic, it was definitely more of a sex, two sexy girls up there. But did like we did the whole whipped cream on the chest and you know what I mean. Like um, and I think that's funny, you know and my girlfriend's a devil and we're {hisses and growls}, devils and stuff like that. I mean we definitely do try, like we're hams like, we don't try to make our selves look good, you know what I mean, if anything we make fun of our selves. So even if something's really serious it's still kind of funny, you know what I mean?

B: Umhm, umhm, umhm
N: ...you know? Yeah but, yeah, um, definitely with Shocore it's, it's not like 'All You Can Eat'. I mean it's the same dancing and kinda the same idea but their music's really heavy and serious. You know what I mean? So And 'All You Can Eat', you can pick funny campy songs and do twists and stuff to songs and stuff.
B: So anything, anything, I just like to, you know, I like to open up at the end cause you know...
N: Yeah
B: ...sometimes I don't think of things.
N: Yeah
B: You know, I've only seen the show once, you know.
N: You saw it and you saw Shocore?
B: I saw Shocore. I haven't seen 'All You Can Eat'. I just saw it on here. [points to a video tape]
N: Ohh. We should try to send you some newer shows.
B: Yeah?
N: We just did a show at the Brickhouse. Unbelievable.
B: That's, Heather said, yeah that there was apparently a really good um recording on that.
N: Really good, yeah, and this director that we just, um he just shot the video we did, he came and filmed it and it's sooo good.
B: Oh.
N: Yeah, it'd be worth, probably sending it out to you or something like that.
B: Okay, yeah, because that'd be great.
N: That'd be good, um. But no, I, you should, it's too bad that we hadn't, didn't have a show or something when you were around.
B: Yeah.
N: That would have been the ultimate thing cause you'd totally seeing what we're talking about, like, well I mean you can see in the videotapes but, um yeah. Look at how messy the floor is. [We're looking at photos] We always make a mess. That's the thing. It's always a mess. We always get in trouble. Always. We had to do a few shows to pay for um cleaning bill. {Brandy chuckles}Yeah. Always messy. But we clean up our own mess.
B: Ohhh. {chuckles} Yeah, umm just really quickly, um in light of the things I've asked you, is there anything, if you want to look at the consent form again. I'd just like to give, ah you know, to give you a chance...
N: Oh no. I'm pretty liberal. I don't really care what gets written or you know, {Brandy laughs} or what comes out. I've seen it all, so I'm not, I don't shy away from any of that you can do whatever you want. I'm really flattered that you picked us to do this.
B: Well, it's awesome, I think its great...
N: Yeah
B: ...I think it's really neat.
N: Thanks a lot.
B: Yeah
N: It's really nice. I think its like one of the most nicest things that's ever happened to us.

B: {chuckles} Well, I'm honored then cause its…
N: We're really honored, yeah
B: …well its, I just think its great. I think you know you can tell because, if I just thought it was something, you know, I, like I'm, all my work's from feminist perspective…
N: Umhm
B: …and um you know if I thought it was just trash…
N: Umhm
B: …or you know I wouldn't have been drawn to it. But I was very much drawn to it and um I thought it was great.
N: You got it! You got it!
B: Well hopefully. I thought, I was like there's something going on there. I wanted to check it out. And I think it's really neat.
N: Excellent.
B: Yeah, so I'll just turn this off now
N: Alright
B: {chuckles}
{Tape Off}

Legend

(....)
Signals any words that were not included, or another, improper word was used, in the sentence but should have been in order to make contextual sense

CAPITALIZATION
When not signaling the beginning of a name, pronoun, place, title, sentence or new statement, this signals an emphasis on syllables, words or statements by the speaker

/
After a word signals that the word was not finished

{....}
Signals any non-verbal or non-spoken communication, such as shrugs, inhaling deep, laughter, pauses, inaudible words, etc

Repeated letters, ex: Umm or Ummm
Signals drawn out letters or syllables, more letters signals a longer duration

...
Signals a statement that was or will be completed on another line or a statement that simply was never ended

[....]
Signals information that was not in the interview, but was added during transcription or replaces the names of people who did not consent to their names being used